

FURS
AND
FUR
GARMENTS

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RICHARD
DAVEY





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HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

FURS AND FUR GARMENTS

BY
RICHARD DAVEY



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THE PRIAMUS MONKEY.

(*Semnopithecus Priamus.*)

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FURS AND FUR GARMENTS

CHAPTER I

Origin of the use of fur in costume—Mentioned in Scripture—Its great antiquity—The red dye—Dyed rams—The Bairam ram—Byzantine and Venetian ladies—A red terrier—The legend of the Golden Fleece—Medea—The Amazons.

THE use of the skins of wool and fur bearing animals as convenient and readily adapted clothing, goes back to the remotest antiquity, even to the days of our first parents, who made themselves garments with the skins of beasts. This costume is common among all savage and half-civilized nations in cold, temperate and semi-tropical climates. In the torrid zone, however, the use made of the furs of the more showy animals is purely ornamental, and this

for obvious reasons. But apart from the mere employment of skins as warm clothing, there grew up, at an early period, a taste which naturally created a demand for the more beautiful furs for purposes of personal adornment and ornament. Of this we find many examples cited in Scripture. Some biblical scholars think, for instance, that the "badgers' skins," which formed part of the outermost covering of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, were in reality the skins of the otter—the badger being unknown in Egypt, Arabia, and Palestine. Below this covering was yet another, which was formed of a series of rams' skins dyed red (Exodus xxxv. v. 19).

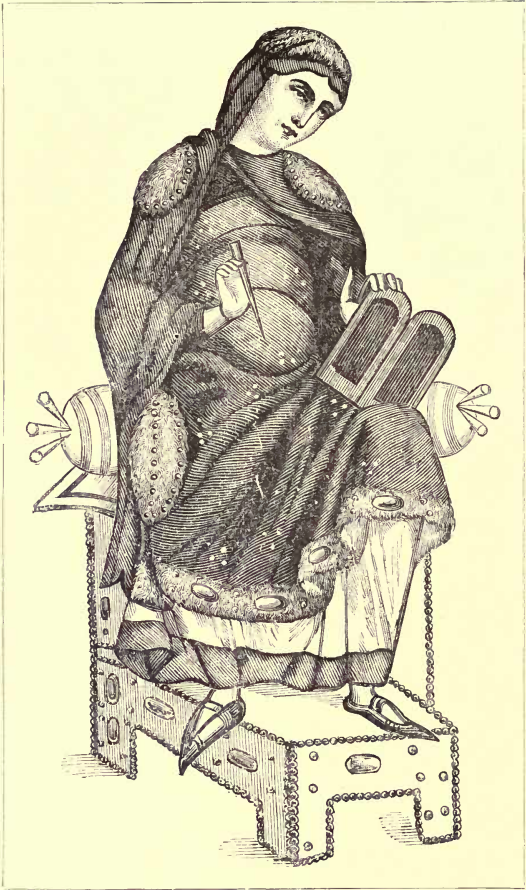
It is remarkable that to this day throughout the East it is a popular practice to dye domestic animals a peculiar carrotty red. You will notice all over Asia Minor cattle dragging ploughs, wag-gons and arabas (private carriages), with tufts of their hair dyed a vivid red. I have seen in some of the villages horses with their fetlocks dyed red, and in Sardou's *Gismonda*, a play recently produced with remarkable accuracy of detail, a child's rocking-horse is introduced, dyed a vivid carrot hue. Now, the scene of the drama is laid in Athens during the Middle Ages, and the authority for

this curious colouring for a toy horse is the existence in the Museum of the Louvre of several specimens of ancient toys similarly treated as to their colouring. The fashion, too, in the East, of dyeing that very odd but popular pet, a fat ram, a vivid brick-red, must have an origin, which has not been handed down to us. The ram sacrificed by the Sultan on the morning of the Kurban Bairam is dyed a bright red orange. In an ancient Italian work on Constantinople, published in 1524, with illustrations by Pietro Vercellio, the nephew of Titian, the following curious and now obsolete ceremony is described. "At dawn, on the morning of the Kurban Bairam, the Sultan, armed with a gold-handled knife, richly studded with gems, slays twelve fat rams, which are painted a brilliant red. They are of enormous size, and have tails which weigh many pounds." In the bazaars of Constantinople huge rams, some of them very old, with tremendous tails, are allowed to roam about, and are treated as pets by the merchants.

Whether the rams' skins hung round the Tabernacle, and mentioned in Exodus, were simply dyed red for the sake of artistic effect, so that in the course of time it became a fashion to dye animals the same strange tint, has, I believe,

never been determined. When recently in Turkey, I saw a Maltese terrier belonging to a Turkish lady dyed the same colour, but her husband could give no reason why it had thus been disfigured, except that it was considered to be "very pretty." Another singular point in connection with the choice of this peculiar reddish-orange colour is that it is produced by the same dye used by the Persians to stain their beards and hair—*hennin*.

The Byzantine belles used this red dye. The Persians from time immemorial have dyed their hair and beards red—probably the custom has a religious *raison d'être*, the Persians being Zoroastrians and fire worshippers. Doubtless, they set the fashion to the Venetian ladies of "Titian red hair." The fair ladies on the Grand Canal improved upon the Perso-Byzantine dye by adding a peculiar golden lustre to it, the recipe for which is still extant. The process must have been very tiresome, for the lady had to pass her tresses over the broad brim of a crownless straw hat, and sit for three hours in the sun before the proper colouring was obtained by the effect of the heat and light. In old engravings of Venice in the sixteenth century you will frequently see groups of persons represented as apparently sitting under umbrellas on



A BYZANTINE LADY (NINTH CENTURY).
(From the Louandre Collection.)

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the roofs of their houses. They are in reality Venetian ladies dyeing and drying their hair.

Of late years it has become fashionable in Paris for super-elegant ladies to dye their hair a bright copper colour. Possibly the choice of red dye for animals may have originated in a desire to defeat the evil eye—red being in all mythologies an infernal colour, and in many old pictures the wicked one is represented scarlet, and in a beautiful fragment by Orcagna, his Satanic Majesty is painted black of face and body, but with red hair. Miss Pardoe, in her charming book, "The City of the Sultan," describes the Turkish ladies of her time as using a Persian dye, with the view of turning their naturally dark tresses a bright red. I have seen in the West Indies, sheep with tufts of hair dyed red, and some of the negroes also dye their hair red, whereas not a few of the American Indians add a red wig to their war costume. In the East the dye used is known as Armenian or Turkey red, or Bole, an ocherous earth, being a composition of whiting, red oxide of iron and red ochre.

Unquestionably the history of any trade or commerce, if traced to its earliest origin, would prove of the utmost importance in assisting us to form a just estimate of the civilisation to which a nation

has arrived. Take as an instance in point the history of cereals and viniculture, of which we possess consecutive testimony from a very remote age, and by means of which we can form a very just idea, so to speak, of the procession of civilisation, from the time when bread of the roughest kind was staple food, to the elaborate confectionery of the eighteenth and present centuries. The history of the furriers' trade, however, has even greater ethnological and geographical value than any other; for, in addition to its importance as illustrating the progress of man in costume, it gives us a very fair idea of the various geographical discoveries made in early times, especially in the Northern latitudes, whence the finest furs are obtained. I have before me a very curious and interesting work, published in the early part of the eighteenth century, under the title of "*Les Fourroures*," by M. Gottier. Amid much interesting matter it contains evidences of great research among authorities little known or no longer extant. He seems to think—and, indeed, apparently with very excellent reason—that the expedition of the Argonautes to carry off the Golden Fleece is nothing more nor less than an allegory connected with the early fur traders, whose vessels brought

from the Black Sea, through the Bosphorus, into the Greek seas, a vast quantity of furs obtained from the Iberians, whose country is now known as Siberia, by the simple addition of the letter *S* to the original name. Thus, possibly, Jason was merely a fur trader, round whose very doubtful commercial and domestic morality poetry has woven one of her most glorious legends. Medea, according to tradition, landed at Therapia, nearly opposite to the rocks at the entrance to the Black Sea, between which the Argonauts passed on the famous expedition conducted by Jason. The Enchantress is represented in an archaic sculpture, preserved in the Museum at Constantinople, as wearing a sort of cloak evidently lined with fur. We can imagine her, therefore, landing on the pine-clad shores of Therapia, close to where now stands the British Embassy, with her fur-lined cloak and her infernal baggage, containing a complete assortment of magical and mischief-making implements, bent on vengeance upon the recalcitrant Jason, whom she eventually traced with fatal results to Corinth. The Amazons, we are assured by Strabo, wore furs, and effectively, so they are represented upon several ancient bas-reliefs illustrating their heroic exploits. The Bacchantes decked themselves with

the skins of panthers, which must have been more uncommon in the tropical parts of Asia Minor than at present; for, in the sixteenth century, a panther's skin was sold at Genoa for something like £40, equal to £200 of our present money, as *une grande rareté*. Vossius describes the Parthenians as wearing black and white bearskins, the head of the bear being arranged as a sort of helmet, which must have produced an awe-striking effect. The question is, whence came these white bears; naturally from the extreme North, thus indicating the existence of trade in these bearskins of the utmost antiquity. Even in the Homeric age, and certainly under the Greeks and Romans, the great plain of the Taurus, now misnamed Armenia, was the centre of a vast fur trade, the ramifications of which extended into Asia Minor and Europe, as far as Scotland and Norway. But the ancients did not use furs only as garments, but as bed-clothes and sheets. Even now, all over the colder parts of Asia, fur coverlets are thrown over the beds, and silk sheets lined with fur are still used. An old writer mentions that, in 1672, fur coverlets were awarded to the best behaved invalids in the Parisian hospitals.

CHAPTER II

The Assyrians—Semiramis and her 8,000 tiger skins—Persian hats—The antiquity of the fur trade in China and Japan—Nero—Rugs in antiquity—The Goths and Ostrogoths—The Scythians—The clergy and the sumptuary laws.

THE Assyrians were exceedingly lavish of costly furs, and we are told by Herodotus and other ancient historians that they were conspicuous amongst the adornments of the palace of Sardanapalus. Queen Semiramis brought back with her from her Indian expedition over 8,000 tiger skins, with which, doubtless, she carpeted the enormous palace which she constructed in the so-called Hanging Gardens. Herodotus states that the people who inhabited the shores of the "Caspian Sea were clad in the rich fur of the seal," and Ælianus and Plutarch both speak of the "Pontic Mouse," by some supposed to be the ermine, whose fur made beautiful robes, and also coverings for the couches in the palace of Pharnabazus.

The ancient as well as the actual Persian head-

dress, consists of a tall cylinder-shaped hat covered with astrachan fur. The Ancient Jews also wore a fur hat shaped very much like our silk chimney-pot hat, covered with trimmed beaver dyed black. In the early part of this century when the tall hat became the fashion, it was covered with black beaver instead of silk.

The Chinese and Japanese claim that they have used furs as articles of luxury for at least 2,500 years (the Chinese probably for 3,000 years). And at the Health Exhibition, many will remember how admirably lined with various rich furs were the winter garments shown in the Chinese and Japanese Sections, and it should not be forgotten that the costumes of these great Empires have undergone little or no variation in countless generations. It was, therefore, doubtless from the East that the Greeks and Romans derived their love for costly skins. It is true that, owing in part to the mildness of the Athenian and Roman climates, fur was rarely introduced into civil costumes, although it was almost universally so in military, and, moreover, much used to cover couches, and those beautiful but rather chilly mosaic pavements, the revival of which, under the name of "Venetian paving," in the present day, provides another proof,



ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.
(From an early Mosaic.)

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if one were needed, that there is absolutely "nothing new under the sun"—and with the mosaics and the ancient lounges, have we not also developed a taste for handsome fur rugs and covers, which are at once so warm and so picturesque?

Nero, as his historian Suetonius narrates, usually sat upon an ivory throne, which stood upon the skin of an African lion, whose head admirably stuffed (for the taxidermist's art is one of the oldest known), and looking as if alive, served the terrible tyrant as a footstool. The habit of carpeting a room entirely, as we did, until quite recently, and still do (sanitary precautions to the contrary notwithstanding) was unknown in antiquity. Our much abused forbears were too sensible not to know that rugs and skins, which can be easily moved and shaken, are far more convenient and wholesome, since the dust can be soon got out of them, than a heavy and permanently nailed down carpet, which can be taken up only at stated and infrequent intervals. Hence rugs and skins were in great demand in that luxurious period which elapsed between the last years of the Roman Republic and the fall of the Empire. When a victorious Emperor or warrior returned in triumph to Rome, he usually brought with him an incredible quantity of skins and hides of wild animals. But,

although we have a few busts and statues extant of Roman Emperors, wearing a material on their shoulders which looks not unlike fur, there is no indication until the third century that it was employed for the ornamentation of dress, although, indeed, most probably it was so, for the linings of winter coats and cloaks. In the fourth century the fur of the beaver, or Pontic Dog as it was called, was in great demand, also the ermine, which now begins to be included in the regalia of the various newly Christianised nations. The tribes of Goths, Huns and Ostrogoths, which were migrating in such hosts from the North, carried with them the choice furs of the Arctic regions, and during the middle ages they became articles of luxury throughout Central and Southern Europe. In the Crusading era, the warriors returning home brought with them many Oriental luxuries, and among them furs were conspicuous.

Fur of rare quality was, however, little known in Western Europe until the second and third centuries, when, as already said, the eruptions of the Northern tribes reached as far as Rome. Their strange costumes, mainly consisting of fur-lined or bordered garments, soon attracted the attention of the civilized nations they invaded who were already familiar with

the rare furs of the East, but who were charmed with the beauty of the choicer skins brought from the Northern regions by their savage visitors. Gradually a trade in furs was opened between the Romans of the later empire and the Northern tribes, but no certain information can be found older than the sixth century upon this subject. A writer of that period speaks of the Scythians—a name by which he designated the people of Sweden, Norway, Lapland and Finland—as sending their celebrated furs to the Italian markets; and another tribe of Scythians, the *Hanugari*, who were known on account of their trade in *mouse* skins.

It is a well-known fact, that in early times, *furs* were the sole wealth of these Northern tribes, and the only goods they exported. In them they paid their taxes, and we find various records of the number of skins of martens, reindeer, otters, bears, &c., which passed annually out of their hands.

Furs became fashionable and popular in England very early. At first only the best native furs were used, afterwards those of foreign countries; and then, as now, the more costly they were the more highly were they esteemed. They were introduced into the state dress of royalty, and soon into that of the higher nobility. The “mantle” thrown over

the cuirass or harness was bordered with costliest fur, and, hence, ermine and sable, &c., became parts of the oldest coats of arms. Thus the Lady Constance, in Shakespeare's *King John*, upbraids Austria, "Thou wear a lion's hide! doff it for shame, and hang a calf's skin on those recreant limbs." Soon the costliness of the furs in fashion became so extravagant, that strict sumptuary laws were enacted with respect to them. The clergy often preached against them, and endeavoured to prevent the excessive indulgence in their display, which had become common even among those who could ill afford such expensive raiment.

It is, however, a curious fact that furs figure very rarely in heraldry of the earliest era of that science. Vair, sable and ermine, however, are frequently introduced from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries. The tails of the ermines always appearing brushed out fan-shaped. The ermine figures as a small white animal in the bearings of Anne of Brittany, surmounted by a ducal crown.

CHAPTER III

Anecdote of Charlemagne—The fur trade in Byzantium—The fur markets of Constantinople—The Turks and their fur garments—A phenomenally cold winter—Galla Placida and her state robe—Justinian—The Kakaryé Jamè—The Italian Pellicerie—Ermine—St. John Chrysostom—The costumes of the Grand Viziers—Murad II.—The tandour.

It is related of Charlemagne that he wore a winter pelisse ; but, that whilst the most costly oriental furs were worn by his courtiers, he confined himself to those of his native country, using only sheep and other common skins. A story is told of his ridiculing his courtiers, when, once upon a time, on a cold rainy day, he went, wearing only a sheep's skin garment, hunting with his suite. His attendants, who had learnt in Italy to admire the rare skins which could there be purchased from the Levantines, wore rich foreign cloths and furs. These having become thoroughly drenched, they dried them at the fire, with the result that they crumbled to pieces. The Emperor

caused his sheep's skin, when dried, to be well rubbed; and then, showing it to his courtiers, lectured them upon their folly in wearing such expensive but useless dresses.

As the glass of fashion and elegance after the fall of the Roman Empire was fixed in Constantinople, the capital of the new empire, the great fur market of the world for over 1,400 years was Byzantium; and it is a matter of archeological interest that the actual skin and fur market of Stamboul stands in precisely the same spot as the old Byzantine fur market, a fact clearly established by certain extremely ancient bas-reliefs, representing scenes in a fur market, which have been discovered in the vicinity. The Turks undoubtedly wore fur-lined *caftans*, or robes, long before they conquered Constantinople, but in all probability they ignored the skilful arts of dressing skins and furs carried to perfection by the Byzantines, and learnt them from their captives after the fatal year 1453, when the cross was torn from St. Sophia and replaced by the crescent. The chief reason for the importance of the furrier's business in Constantinople is, doubtless, mainly due to the climate, a very cold one in winter. As an illustration of how cold Constantinople can be, I will simply

record that in the year 1415 the ice on the Sea of Marmara was so great that by its pressure on the shore it broke down the sea wall, and that in 1892 people were able to walk across the upper part of the Golden Horn. Under these circumstances it is pleasant to wear a coat lined with the softest furs, and the rich Byzantine costumes were in winter always lined and edged with furs of all kinds. The decorative qualities of the tiger and leopard skins were duly appreciated, and in a fine mosaic, still extant, of the Empress Galla Placida, Queen of Lombardy, she is represented as wearing a lining of leopard's skin to her court train. It may be here observed that the Lombardic and other Italian sovereigns, from the fifth to the eleventh centuries, followed with the most scrupulous exactitude the fashions of Byzantium in matters of costume and manners. Ravenna under the Exarchs was a replica, so to speak, of Constantinople, and in the splendid churches of that most interesting city, still so rich in Byzantine architecture, will be found many mosaics representing great personages wearing fur lined and trimmed robes—notably in the glorious mosaics of the churches of San Vitale and Sant 'Appolinare in Classis. In Constantinople the Turkish iconoclasts destroyed in a few months almost

every vestige of pictorial and plastic art which existed in the 670 churches of the "city loved of God." They coated them with yellow and whitewash. Within the past few years a number of mosaics have, however, been discovered under the paint which the Turks employed when they disfigured the churches in their zeal to convert them into mosques. Among these the most beautiful is the famous Kakaryé Jamè, or mosaic mosque, formerly a Christian church of the twelfth century. The domes and walls alike are rich with mosaics, and among the numerous figures represented are many wearing rich furs. The Emperor Justinian and the ex-circus rider Theodora, are, for instance, seen attired in rich robes edged with fur of a dark colour, possibly sable. The Constantinopolitan fur market was supplied with merchandise from the nations inhabiting the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas. Hence it was despatched into Europe generally by sea to Genoa and Venice, where whole streets were devoted to the sale of furs. The Italian fur markets were called *Pellicerie*, and to this day furs and skins are sold in Genoa in a long narrow series of streets still called the *Pelliceria*, or Peltry.

The Byzantine emperors exacted from the conquered or tributary princes an annual tribute of

furs and skins of beasts, and undoubtedly it is to them that we owe the introduction of ermine as a royal fur. The Greeks, who were very fond of ermine, believed it to be the skin of a white rat. Wagner and Ray are the two first naturalists who classified this little animal among the weazels. The Byzantines called it the Armenian rat fur—hence the word Hermine, or ermine—and until quite late in the seventeenth century it was always termed in France *le rat d'Arménie*. The finest skins were in olden times obtained from the rich plateau of the Taurus (Armenia); but the animal exists elsewhere, and the dukes of Brittany usually wore ermine robes of native production. Still, even now the great ermine markets of the East are Van, Erivan, Ezeroum and Bitlis. But let us return for a moment to the Byzantines and their costumes—the richest ever worn by men and women; St. John Chrysostom, who has left us such a spirited account of life in Constantinople in his time, speaks of the “rich soft furs of the wealthy.” He contrasts the ladies of rank, wrapped up in the costliest furs, “brocades, cloaks lined with the skins of beasts brought at infinite cost from far off lands,” with the poor beggars in their scanty cotton garments, perishing with cold. “Ladies,” he tells us, “could

pay a slave's ransom for a splendid cloak, and vied with each other as to the magnificence of the fur which lined it. Often do men," says he, "stint and slave themselves in order that their wives may wear costly raiments and rare silks and furs." In winter all who could afford to do so wore costly furs, and even the lower orders—as, indeed, do their descendants—invariably faced the bitter wind which blows from the Black Sea in fur-lined garments—rats', rabbits' and cats' skins being employed by those who could not afford the rich sable, ermine and fox linings of the wealthy. The Byzantines used fur in the vestments of their priests, but only sable, ermine and astrachan were permitted. The inventories of church furniture belonging to St. Sophia contain mention of furs. After the great Archbishop Chrysostom was exiled he sought refuge on the plateau of Armenia among the hunters, and he died wrapped up in his *caftin*, or fur-lined cloak. When the Turks conquered Constantinople, and converted it in the fifteenth century into the capital of their heterogenous empire, they adopted, with modifications, the costumes of the fallen Byzantines. Thus the *caftin*, or fur-lined cloak, which they rarely put aside, even in summer, was worn by the Byzantines, and the *fez* is also Greek.

Formerly this head-dress was worn inside the turban to indicate the right of conquest. It was, as it were, clasped in the folds of the distinctive head-dress of the followers of Mahomet. But the grandfather of the actual Sultan—Abd-ul-Hamid II.—Sultan Mahmoud II., the Reformer, decreed that the turban might disappear if only the *fez*, or crimson scull cap were retained. In ancient times, and, indeed, until 1825, the Grand Vizier wore a flowing robe of white satin, lined and edged with ermine. His head-dress consisted of a mighty egg-shaped turban edged with fur. The Sultan also wore ermine, but not invariably, and it does not seem to have been special to his rank, for some of the marvellous brocaded robes belonging to the earlier sultans, Selim II., Ibrahim, Murad III., &c., exhibited in the Treasury, are lined with sable and fox. The Sultan Selim III. wore a robe lined with a lion's skin; another often appeared with a leopard's hide introduced into his costume with martial effect. The present Sultan wears a robe lined with a vivid yellow fox fur—possibly it may be yellow sable. The costumes of the Janiseries included many rich furs, and the Boluch Bachi, or captain of a hundred Janiseries, wore a *caftin* or cloak lined with astrachan and a head-

dress of the same fur, surmounted by a sort of fan-shaped ornament made of peacock feathers. The Turkish ladies in winter wear a *zimarra*, a garment which might be described as a fur-lined tea-gown, of velvet, silk or cashmere of the richest kind, hanging to the feet and completely enveloping the person. In olden times parties of Turkish and Giaour ladies would sit in winter round a *tandour*—a sort of large brazier filled with burning nibs or fine charcoal—usually covered over with a rich fur rug, and indulge in a smoke and a gossip. In winter in every Turkish household fur rugs and even fur-lined sheets are used in addition to carpets; and when a Turkish household moves, the furniture mainly consists of furs, embroidered coverlets, and carpets and rugs, instead of chairs and tables, as with us—these articles of furniture being very little known in an Eastern house, where divans are made to do duty for sofas, chairs, chests of drawers, and even of tables.

CHAPTER IV

The Venetians and the Turks—Nurnberg—Venetian ladies and their furs—Progress of the fur trade in Italy—Lucrezia Borgia—Her wedding dress—Caterina Cornaro.

THROUGHOUT Eastern Europe, as far as Vienna, fur is universally worn, and Pesth, Leipsig, Amsterdam, Prague and Frankfort are even now leading fur markets. Nurnberg was in the zenith of its glory a very important fur centre, and in Bruges there is to this day a *Pelterie*, or fur market. But in the middle ages Venice and Genoa carried on an enormous commerce with Constantinople and the Levant, and their fur markets were famous resorts of merchants from Germany, France and England. The Venetians and Genoese, whose connection with Constantinople was for nearly fourteen hundred years exceedingly intimate, transacted business in Pera, Galata and the Golden Horn side of Constantinople itself, beyond the Greek quarter of the Phanar, which were literally Italian cities with independent government, civil and

ecclesiastic, under a Podesta, appointed by the two great republics of Genoa and Venice.

This commercial intimacy naturally led, in the course of time, to social influences, which bore upon Venetian private and public life in a very curious manner. The Venetian women, until the sixteenth century, lived retired, obscure and harem-like lives, and their dress was nearly identical with that of their Byzantine and Turkish sisters, even to the Yasmac, fur-lined *feridgé* and the high clogs. The artistic genius of the Renaissance changed all this, and the gorgeous costumes invented by Capaccio, Paul Veronese and Titian, took the place of the austere garments of a former period. Velvets and silks now predominated. Women went about with their necks bare, bedecked with strings of the rarest pearls, set off by the costliest furs. All sorts of furs were now introduced into the scheme of personal decoration by the painter's art—witness the sumptuous works of Veronese and Tintoretto. What a debauch, so to speak, of colours, of stuffs, of skins and furs—ermine, miniver, sable, leopard and fox, mingle with flashing jewels, golden chains, and stiff brocades and shimmering satins! It is a veritable riot of magnificence—tempered by good taste and artistic feeling of the highest order. Florence

and Rome followed the lead of Venice. Lucrezia Borgia, the belied daughter of Alexander VI., goes as a *sposa*, or bride, to Ferrara, to become duchess to her fourth husband, Duke Alfonzo. Sanudo, in his diary—he followed the beautiful duchess in her progress from Rome to Bologna, and thence to Ferrara—can scarcely find adjectives to qualify the splendour of the fair bride's wardrobe. Pages upon pages are filled with descriptions of silks and brocades, velvets and taffetas. The jewels are so large and so numerous that one wonders not only whence they all came, but what has become of them. There were hundreds of necklaces and diadems of pearls, emeralds, diamonds and rubies, in this wonderful *corbeille de nocce*—*cassetta* the Italians called it—and heaps of "*pellice*." "Ten mules," he tells us, "carried the boxes which contained the furs belonging to my lady the duchess, the majority of which came from the East." On her marriage-day she wore a garment of ruby velvet, in the French style, edged with dark fur. Her train was of cloth of gold, lined with ermine. Round her neck she wore the thirty rows of priceless pearls the Pope gave her, and on her head a diadem of diamonds which blazed like a sun. In the long list of furniture and effects, which formerly belonged to Maria

Moncenigo (dated Venice, 1584), are mentioned many fur-lined garments—a court robe, lined with ermine; a robe in the Roman fashion, lined with marten (*fodrata di martori*); a petticoat of black satin, lined and edged with old ermine (*zebellini vecchi*); a Roman robe for the night, lined with wolf; another of crimson satin, lined with rabbit (*conigli*); a court robe of green velvet, lined with sable from Russia; forty-five robes lined with various furs; a robe of blue satin (very old), lined with very fine ermine; a train of yellow damask, lined with marten; a yellow silk train, lined and trimmed with white feathers (very rare); a train of pink brocade, edged with peacock feathers—those from the breast; one hundred pairs of shoes, many lined with fur. The Venetian doge wore a robe of cloth of gold, lined with ermine, and the “terrible ten” wore crimson robes, edged with dark fur.

In the list of the furniture and effects of the very noble Venetian lady Maria, *relicta quondam Clarissimi Domini Hieronimi Pollani*, who died January 7th, 1590, we find over sixty fur-lined robes, and a great number of bed-covers lined with fur. There are also a curious variety of rugs, made of the hides of beasts, with the heads and tails stuffed to look like life; a lion's hide, with the head stuffed



THE CONSTABLE DE BOURBON.
(After Titian.)

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and with glass eyes ; a tiger's skin with head stuffed ; a monkey stuffed like life ; and, finally, a big box (*cassone*) full of moth-eaten fur rugs.

From the archives of the illustrious house of Corner—to which belonged Caterina Cornaro, the famous Queen of Cyprus, whose superb portrait by Titian, representing her as wearing a fur-lined robe, is so well-known—I extracted a list of fifty heads of animals, mostly stags, beautifully stuffed, “with horns and all complete.”

If we may judge by Titian's marvellous masterpiece, which is here reproduced, his portrait of the Constable de Bourbon, that terrible man who sacked Rome and destroyed in twelve days more artistic wonders and remains of antiquity than had done the Vandals and the Huns, he must have been exceedingly partial to furs, for his cloak and hat are entirely covered with sable, which the illustrious Venetian artist has rendered to perfection. This is one of the earliest pictures in which fur is painted with anything approaching realism, although it was frequently introduced into the works of much earlier artists, in those of Angelico, Ghirlandajo, Perugino, Memling and Van Eyck, but to Raphael and Titian is due the credits of first painting it in a bold and masterly style. Raphael, after his first attempts,

which were not particularly successful—*vide* the St. John of the Tribune, at Florence—seems to have become enamoured of fur, and has introduced it in many varieties in most of his portraits, and with astonishing effect. Titian, however, when he does paint fur, excels in the perfect manner in which he gives us an idea, not only of its softness and quality, but of its thickness and rich variations of tone and colour. Another Italian master, who was particularly fortunate in the manner in which he rendered fur, is Paris Bordone, who painted a good deal at the Court of the Valois, and from whose brush we have a very noble portrait of Mary Stuart as a girl and another of Henry VIII. as a young man.

CHAPTER V

Vair—Cinderella's slipper—Planché—The Miniver: its history—Used as a royal fur—St. Bernard preaches against extravagance in furs—Miniver in ecclesiastical costume—The Canons of the Lateran—Nuns—Edward III. limits the use of ermine to the royal family.

ACCORDING to a sentence in the *Roman de Garin*, 1060, even at that early date, furs in France were greatly esteemed and large sums paid for them. "What matters," says the bard, "the great price you pay for your costly furs, if your hearts are worthless." Le *Ménu-ver* or Miniver,¹ so much spoken of in the history of French costume, is usually supposed to be the under part of the Miniver, or grey squirrel. Théophile Gauthier, in an essay on Cinderella, assures us that young lady's

1 Miniver is really made from ermine, spotted with astrachan. Astrachan is a much more ancient fur than is usually supposed. Some miniver robes of the fifteenth century have been recently carefully examined, and leave no doubt but that the black tips on them are astrachan, and not ermine tails.

famous glass slipper was not made of glass at all, but simply lined with *ver* or *miniver*, wrongly interpreted as *verre* (glass).

The epoch immediately preceding the Renaissance was a golden age for the fur trade. The rage for wearing fur-lined and trimmed garments spread to the North. The Crusaders had brought back with them many skins and furs of animals little known to our ancestors; and the wardrobes of our kings and queens, from the Conqueror down, show an increasing scale in the popularity of the use of furs. Thus we know that Matilda of Flanders, wife of the Conqueror, had one mantle lined with ermine — possibly the white Brittany rat, with dyed tails — but Eleanor of Aquitaine, the wife of Henry II., had “many fur-lined robes”; but it is not until the period of the Crusaders that the rarer kinds of furs are mentioned, in our national wardrobe accounts, in any great numbers. Margaret of Anjou is represented in her memorial portrait, in the great chancel window of the cathedral at Angiers, wearing a tight-fitting jacket — it looks as if it were made of closely-knitted, corded silk — edged with ermine.

St. Bernard on one occasion preached against the extravagance of the clergy in the matter



A NOBLEMAN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.
(From a Contemporary Drawing by Vercelli.)

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of furs, and denounced specially the use of ermine dyed crimson, which the priests were in the habit of using as lining for their sacerdotal costumes. At Christmas, 1316, Philip the Long of France purchased an ermine cloak, which had cost the lives of thousands of animals. This is nothing, however, to the coronation robes of the later Czar of Russia, in the construction of which over 250,000 ermines were sacrificed. The Empress Catherine II.'s coronation robes cost 25,000 roubles, and were of richly embroidered velvet, lined with ermine and edged with sable. This Imperial lady was in the habit of presenting furs of great price to friendly sovereigns, and once sent a superb sable cloak to Voltaire, as a mark of her esteem. The coronation robes of Napoleon I. preserved at Nôtre Dame are also lined with costly ermine.

Planché tells us that the principal furs used in olden time in England were "biche (the skin of the female deer), budge (lambskin), Calabrere, cicimus, dossus, ermine, foxes, foynes and fitches (*i.e.*, polecats and weasels), greys or gres, sables, wolves and vair." Ermine, he informs us, is called *Heremence Pelles*, in the Council of London, A.D. 1138, cap. 15.

By the end of the twelfth century no one would

wear either sheep or fox skins, which had so lately been worn both by the barons and the clergy. It would seem that fashion bore sway and was as fleeting then as now!

Vair—a fur ranking with ermine and sable, amongst the most highly prized of the many used for the lining or trimming of mantles, gowns, and other articles of apparel—is said to have been the skin of a species of weasel, grey on the back, and white on the throat and belly. According to Guillaume le Briton, the skins of which it was composed came from Hungary; but the white stoat is called to this day a *minifer* in Norfolk. Vair gives its name to a charge in heraldry, wherein it is depicted like a series of heater-shaped shields, alternately white and blue (argent and azure), and such is its general appearance on the mantles or tippetts of high personages in illuminations. Ermine, however, does not appear to have been used, as already said, as an official mark of high distinction, earlier than the fourth century; but in the sixth it was adopted by the French as distinctive of legal dignity, and is so to this day, the judges having their scarlet robes edged with ermine. It was used also at a very early period by the Court of Rome, for the state garments of

the cardinals and of the canons of St. John of Lateran, only the little black tails are usually omitted in church costume, in order to emphasize the purity of the ecclesiastical profession.

The Roman cardinals, however, retained the right to wear ermine linings to their state robes; but they very rarely use it. On the other hand, the red velvet tippet, or cape, always worn by the Pope, is lined and edged with ermine, usually without tails.

At the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, ninth century, the dress of the monks was carefully defined, each monk being furnished with gloves; in the summer, "wanti," a kind of glove without fingers, having a place for the thumb and made of woollen cloth; in winter, "muffulœ," which appear to have been made of fur, and to have been a sort of sleeve or deep cuff. In the twelfth century, the canons of a Sens cathedral allowed themselves to be corrupted by presents of beautiful furs, and whilst, in 1127, the Council of London allowed abbesses and nuns to wear the fur of lambs and cats only, furs were then forbidden altogether to the clergy. It is impossible now to ascertain which was the first English sovereign who wore ermine; but it is certain that Edward III. issued a decree, limiting its use exclusively to the royal family, a law, how-

ever, which was not long strictly obeyed, for in Richard III.'s reign another edict was published to the same effect.

Isabeau of Bavaria, the infamous consort of Charles VI. of France, if we may judge from a fine illumination, wore on state occasions robes so thickly bordered with ermine as to present very little of the velvet or brocade of which they were composed. She was a most profligate and extravagant woman, who so grossly neglected her insane husband and children as to arouse universal indignation. Whilst she was flaunting herself about with her paramour Orleans, the King was left to menials in the old Hotel St. Pot, which still exists, and the royal children were so brutally neglected that a contemporary describes the future Queen of England, Catherine of Valois, the wife of our heroic Henry V., and the great-grandmother of the mighty Elizabeth: "Is starved, sick, in rags, and covered with sores and vermin." However, when the facts of the case were known, the Parisians rose in horror, and the wretched little ones were better provided for at the city's expense.



ISABEAU OF BAVARIA, QUEEN OF CHARLES VIII. OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER VI

Philip the Long—St. Louis—Edward III.—The ermine in England—Eleanor of Provence—Philippa of Hainault—Fur in Germany—Mus—The royal crown.

THAT kings and princes during the Crusadery resolved to restrain extravagance in this article of dress, is proved by the fact that our Richard I. and Philip II. of France both announced to their followers their resolution not to wear ermine, sable or other costly furs. We are told by Joinville, that St. Louis, in the thirteenth century, avoided all magnificence, and "wore no costly furs." He brought back with him from Egypt a fashion which he never abandoned. Joinville assures us his robes were always lined with soft lamb's fur, dyed black, possibly astrachan. This same lamb's pelt was frequently dyed violet in the Middle Ages, and is very often mentioned in history as *pourpre*. It was occasionally spotted with brown and red dye.

Philip the Long ordered himself a garment at

Christmas, 1316, consisting of six pieces, furred with miniver, of which we have the following record:—

| | SKINS |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| The honces, or sleeves - - - were | 356 |
| The mantle - - - - - „ | 300 |
| The surcoat - - - - - „ | 226 |
| The upper, or overcoat - - - „ | 298 |
| The second overcoat, or waistcoat - „ | 120 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 1300 |
| | <hr/> |

The well-known contemporary portrait of Jean Sans-peur shows us how profusely fur was used on the costumes of the nobles of this period.

Edward III., in whose reign taxes were laid on many articles imported into England, exacted that no person whose income did not amount to £100 a year should wear furs, under penalty of forfeiting them. One hundred and fifty years later than this, in Germany, citizens, who did not belong to the nobility, were forbidden to wear linings of sable or ermine, and an ordinance of 1530 directs that common citizens, tradesmen and shopkeepers were to wear no trimmed clothes, nor to use marten or other costly lining, and the rich only that made of “lamb, cow, fox, weasel and such like skins.” Merchants and tradesmen were not to wear “marten, sable or ermine,” only “at most, weasel skins,” and their wives the “fur of the squirrel only.”



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Counts and lords might wear all kinds of linings, sable and such like expensive kinds being excepted.

The same sumptuary laws will be found in the Italian, French, and even Spanish archives, proving the extravagance of the nobility in the matter of dress during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Under the denomination of "mus" were included, at the time of which we are writing, not only the little animal we know as the mouse, but all the small warm-blooded animals, which were classed under this same category, just as formerly all large animals were classed together under that of "bos," or ox; so that we may conclude that such skins as those of the squirrel, ermine, sable and marten were included in these cargoes.

The ermine, according to some authorities, did not come to us quite so soon, but, however this may be, the fur was well known in the tenth century, writers of that age considering, as stated, that it was brought into Europe from the northern countries through Armenia, and it was from this circumstance it derived its name. The celebrated Marco Polo, in his remarkable book of travels, mentions ermine as amongst the most expensive ornaments of the Tartars, and specially notices that in 1252 he found the tents of the Cham of Tartary lined with skins of ermines and sables,

which were brought from countries far north, "from the land of darkness."

It is, in all probability, the ermine which is spoken of as the "white weasel" in the laws of a Welsh king of the tenth century, in which we find it enacted that the skin of an ox, a deer, a fox, a wolf and an otter are of the same price, that is, eight times as dear as those of a sheep or goat; that of the "white weasel" eleven times as dear, of a marten, twenty-four times, and of a beaver, *one hundred and twenty times!*

Some old writers speak of this fur as "the precious ermine." The animal itself figures, as previously stated, in the bearings of Anne de Brétagne.

It has been the *royal* fur of England since the time of Edward III., who forbade its use by any not of the blood royal, and there is a law in Austria to the same effect, which is in force at the present time. Our *royal* ermine consists of the white fur, spotted every square inch with the black paws of the astrachan lamb. The royal crown is bordered with a band of ermine, with one row of black spots. Peeresses wear capes of ermine, with rows of black spots according to their rank; the black spots in these are made of the tails of the ermine; the scarlet robes of peers are bordered with ermine without spots.

CHAPTER VII

The "Golden Book of St. Alban's Abbey"—King John—Elizabeth Woodville—Anne of Warwick—Elizabeth of York—A masque under Henry VIII.—Princess Mary's tiger-skin jacket.

IN that sumptuous work, the "Golden Book of St. Alban's Abbey"—now in the British Museum—which was splendidly illuminated in Henry I.'s time, is a miniature of Matilda of Scotland, consort of King Henry I., wearing a scarlet cloak, edged with ermine.

King John, who was passionately fond of fine clothing, and heavily taxed his subjects in order to gratify his luxurious tastes, employed a great deal of fur, and in the Roll Records are some curious entries concerning it. In 1211, he ordered a robe for his luxury-loving wife, Isabella of Angoulême, of "crimson cloth, barred with nine bars of grey fur." On Christmas Day, 1214, he himself appeared at mass dressed in crimson satin robes, lined and edged with black fur; his baldric, which crossed

from shoulder to shoulder, was studded with uncut gems, diamonds, and rubies. His gloves were adorned on the backs, one with a ruby, and the other with a sapphire, and edged with black fur. His crown was edged with ermine, very narrow.

Eleanor of Provence, who was, perhaps, the most beautiful as well as the most unpopular of our female sovereigns, was on one occasion pelted with rotten eggs and stones, as she was passing in a boat with her ladies under London Bridge, on which lamentable occasion she protected her head and face from the uncomfortable storm, which her well-known avarice had roused, by uplifting "a mantle of grey fur."

Philippa of Hainault, the excellent wife of Edward III., was evidently a great patroness of fur, for amongst the entries in her wardrobe accounts, are found items for fur-lined dresses, and we learn that she received no less than five sable cloaks from her father the Count of Hainault. It is a rather curious fact, that although our early sovereigns were unquestionably addicted to wearing furs, there is no trace extant of what they paid for them. Possibly, however, those they wore were royal gifts or parts of the *trousseaux* of the Queens their wives, and imported by them from abroad. Thus



HENRY VII.

we find Isabella of Valois, the pretty consort of Richard II., coming over from France with an extravagant collection of garments. Amongst them being two, which were considered the most magnificent hitherto seen in England. One of them was made of cloth of gold, brocaded with red velvet, in designs of birds, fruits, and flowers, and lined with white fur. The other was of red velvet, stamped with gold devices of heraldry and edged with miniver. This Queen had also a cloak of ermine eight yards long. Her successor, Anne of Bohemia, surnamed "the little Queen," brought with her a fine collection of sable and fox skins, and also "an ermine cloak, very long." The only portrait of Catherine of Valois, Queen of Henry V., represents her wearing a skirt of ermine, and a cloak of satin edged with the same fur. It is not improbable that, since we have record of its existence immediately before his death, Henry VI. was assassinated in the Tower, wearing "a red cloth cloak lined with fox skin."

Queen Elizabeth Woodville, who spent more money upon her clothes than any of her predecessors, during the short time of her triumph invented a costume peculiar to herself, which consisted of a long dress of "bodkin pattern," or stripes of various

coloured silks and satins, edged narrowly with black and white fur alternately. Her coronation robe was of ermine up to the waist, and her train, eight yards in length, was also of ermine, and upheld by twelve ladies each wearing ermine trimmings to their gowns.

There is no record of any remarkable furs belonging to Anne of Warwick, the wretched wife of Richard III., but we do know that this tyrant wore on one occasion a "short cloak lined and edged with sable." There is also an item in the *Rous Roll* of a velvet travelling coat belonging to him lined with sable throughout, and a cap of fox skin with a ruby in it. Louis XI. of France habitually wore a fox skin cap with leaden images of saints stuck in it.

The very beautiful posthumous portrait of Elizabeth of York, by Holbein, represents her as wearing a magnificent robe of brocaded satin, richly trimmed round the wrists and skirts with ermine. The tails sit very close and thick, a kind of fashion which must have been extremely becoming and elegant. On her first appearance in public as Queen she is said to have worn "a kirtle of cloth of gold, furred with ermine, and a hood also bordered with fur." In her chamber at Westminster, on the night of her coronation, 1489, we are informed that "there was no tapestry with human figures upon it, which might



THOMAS HOWARD, DUKE AND EARL OF NORFOLK.
(After Hans Holbein.)

frighten a lady on her first waking ; but there was a rich bed of velvet, striped with gold and garnished with red roses. There was also a cupboard full of gold plate. An oratory with a lamp of silver and a picture of our Lord, and eight skins of beasts, very rare and fine, laid about upon the floor."

Henry VII.'s portraits show him profusely adorned with ermine and other rich furs. Indeed, almost all the male portraits of the Tudor epoch are remarkable for the quantity of furs introduced in the ornamentation of their costume. Among the finest of Holbein's works is his famous portrait of Thomas Howard.

The deeply interesting history of Catherine of Arragon contains many allusions to her predilection for furs of the richest kinds. There is a portrait of her, probably by Holbein, in which she wears sleeves of the finest sable and a hood richly edged with a lighter brown fur.

At Shrovetide, 1509, there was a masque at Richmond, in which Henry VIII. appeared dressed in a Russian dress of fur, and the Earl of Fitzwalter and Wiltshire as a Russian with a furred hat of grey squirrel. The Princess Mary, subsequently Queen Mary I., wore a black mask as an Ethiopian queen and a little jacket of tiger skin.

Henry VIII., after the plunder of the monasteries, made unto himself out of the stolen copes and chasubles, many of which were marvellous specimens of ancient embroidery, gorgeous coats and doublets, which were invariably edged, lined, and turned back with rare fur. We have several portraits of him thus magnificently arrayed, one of which is reproduced here from an exceedingly rare, if not unique, contemporary drawing in the possession of the author. The Versailles portrait of Queen Catherine of Arragon represents her as dressed in deep blue velvet, open to a petticoat of yellow satin. Her sleeves are "revers," or turned back with heavy sables almost to the shoulder. On her head is a coif ornamented with fine jewels, and further adorned with a Spanish *mantilla*. Contrary to preconceived impression, she was a fair-haired woman, with a good skin and colour, but with a certain massiveness which is the reverse of elegant. Her arch-enemy Wolsey wore his robes edged with ermine, and mention is made of fur-lined garments in his wardrobe accounts—possibly tippets of miniver, grey squirrel, and sable, such as the higher clergy often wore in winter at this period.

CHAPTER VIII

Furs in Scotland—Margaret Tudor's furs—Madaleine de Valois—Mary Stuart—Trophies of stuffed animals at Holyrood—Anne Boleyn's nightgowns—Catherine Howard sends a present of furs to the old Countess of Salisbury—Edward VI.'s "mangey" coat—Anne of Cleves—Jane Seymour—Mary Tudor.

IN Scotland, furs and skins of beasts were used in the very night-time, owing, doubtless, not only to the coldness of the climate, but to the fact that this country, in ancient times, was thickly covered with forests, harbouring a great variety of fur-bearing animals, including the bear and the wolf.

The frequent intermarriages between Scottish Kings and French Princesses, undoubtedly introduced into the Court of Edinburgh a much greater degree of luxury and refinement than we imagine, especially when we consider the condition of the nobility, who remained remarkably uncouth in their manners as late as the seventeenth century. It was not, however, until the Renaissance that we hear much about rich clothing in Scotland. There

must have sprung up at this period in Edinburgh itself a goodly trade in furs and skins, and we have certain evidence of the existence in that capital of a "tailor" who was capable of "cleaning" furs. Margaret Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII. and consort of James IV. brought with her a very richly-supplied wardrobe and a great assortment of furs. When she left Scotland rather suddenly, in 1516, after the disasters which befell her husband, she evidently was not able to carry off all her belongings, for we find her writing from Greenwich Palace to her "priest" in Edinburgh, Rev. William Husband, possibly her confessor, to go and see one Robert Spittell, her tailor, who has got her furs "to clean and arrange," to wit, "two pairs ermine cuffs, three wide sleeves of ermine—half lining of ermine for a night-gown—seven edges of ermine and four linings of miniver." She did not, however, get them until after the release of the Bishop of Caithness, nearly three years later, and he brought them to her in a coffer (a trunk) still existing, now owned by Lord Forester. It is covered with the bearings of the House of Douglas, the bleeding heart crowned and the monogram M., surmounted by a crown. It passed into the hands of her grand-daughter, Mary Stuart, who presented it to an ancestor of its actual possessor.

The trousseau of the pretty child-wife of James V., Madaleine de Valois, contained a great quantity of lace, fringes and furs. The inventory of it was taken soon after her death, which, it will be remembered, happened very shortly and suddenly during the wedding fêtes. It contained an endless variety of velvet, silk and satin gowns, and an extraordinary number of furs and "trimmings of ermine." All this property went back to France; probably it reappeared in the trousseau of her successor, the wily Mary of Lorraine, the mother of Mary Stuart, whose stock of furs was very extensive. She seems to have employed the same Robert Spittell or his son as her "tailor," who was in the service of Margaret Tudor, for he is referred to once or twice in her household accounts.

Mary Queen of Scots, who furnished her palace at Holyrood, considerably later, in regal style, with costly draperies, Venetian glasses and mirrors, and inlaid furniture from Florence and even India, also included amongst her many *objets de luxe* rich furs and skins of animals as rugs. She likewise had stags' heads prepared as trophies in her dining hall. These facts will prove that during that great epoch of art, the Renaissance, fur rugs and trophies of animals' heads were highly appreciated, and, indeed, con-

sidered indispensable in order to complete the picturesque decoration of a truly artistic interior.

In the wardrobe entries connected with Anne Boleyn in Henry VIII.'s privy purse, is one to the effect that, in December, 1527, one Master Walter Walsh was paid £216 9s. 8d. (an enormous sum in those days, equal to four times the amount now) for certain stuffs lined with fur for the Lady Anne. On 16th December her furrier (skinner) is paid £105 for goods and workmanship "for my Lady Anne." In 1531 there is a further charge of £40 15s. 8d. payable to Adington, the King's skinner, for furs and work done "for the Lady Anne." From some additional items for *furred* nightgowns, it would seem that this unlucky lady wore such habitually.¹ She paid £15 for one on one occasion, and £10 on another. At her coronation the Lord Mayor and burghers of London wore dresses of scarlet edged with sable. Henry VIII.'s favourite fur was sable, and the Emperor Charles V. once sent him five "sets of sable" worth £400.

Catherine Howard once presented a set of furred petticoats and shoes to her aged aunt, the venerable

¹ It has been observed to the author by a learned authority, that the word nightgown did not always mean nightdress, but that even as late as the first decade of this century, it was sometimes used to signify an evening garment or dress.



HENRY VIII.

(From a Contemporary Drawing in the possession of Mr. Richard Davey.)

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Countess of Salisbury, in the Tower—a few months, by the way, before her terrible murder. In the time of this Queen, and about a week previous to her execution, Lady Margaret Bryan—governess to the children of Catherine of Arragon, Anne Boleyn, and Jane Seymour—writes to the King a touching letter, beseeching him to send her money, “for His Grace Prince Edward has just cut his first teeth. His garments,” she adds, “are barely decent, and he much needs a fresh set of furs, his being ‘mangey.’” Possibly the good lady means moth-eaten; but the word is very expressive. Henry VIII., himself, near this time, was wearing a surcoat and doublet of yellow satin edged with peacock feather trimming. Sumptuous beyond anything yet seen in England were the sables, fox linings, and furs of every description included in the wardrobe imported into England by Anne of Cleves, some of which she subsequently presented to Mary I., in whose reign a mission, confided to Sebastian Cabot, was so successful that he induced the Duke of Muscovy to come to England, where he was royally entertained; and who brought with him an enormous supply of all manner of furs and skins, including a Polar bear’s hide, which caused great surprise, on account of its size and whiteness.

On the occasion of her marriage, Anne of Cleves wore a Dutch dress edged with fur, and the King was "apparelled in a gown of cloth of gold, raised with great flowers of silver and furred with black jennettis." From a sketch by Holbein, Anne appears to have been a fine woman, with a forehead lofty and expansive. Her hair is black, the eyebrows gracefully arched, but there are distinct marks of small-pox, and these were fatal to her. She wears a huge fur Assagonian hat, like a wheel turned bodily up, with a brooch on one side, a by no means unbecoming head-dress. She was really not plain, but, unluckily, the small-pox pits turned the King against her, and possibly saved her head.

Poor flighty Catherine Howard had no fortune when the fatal honour of being made fifth Queen of Henry VIII. was thrust upon her, and her wardrobe, even after she had assumed the highest dignity, was not rich in articles of dress. On the scaffold she "wore a robe of black damask, heavily furred with Jannette." Catherine Parr seems, from extant evidence, to have inherited most of the finery of her predecessors in the matrimonial scheme of Henry VIII., and her wardrobe was very rich in fur-lined "night-gowns" and robes.

Queen Jane Seymour died in child-birth—of

Edward IV.—on Sunday, October 24th, 1537, and we have a quaint description of her lying-in. “She reclined, propped up with fair cushions of crimson damask with gold, and was wrapped about with a round mantle of crimson velvet, furred with ermine. She expired at Hampton Court, and was ‘deeply regretted,’” as we should say. The child was baptized, according to the ritual of the Latin Church, on November 15th, being held at the font by his wet nurse, whom he called, in after years, “Mother Jack.” She is immortalised by Holbein in an exceedingly fine sketch, possessed by Her Majesty. Queen Jane was mourned in a popular contemporary distich, which contains the following curious line:—

“In black were her ladies and black were their fans,”

which reads like the fulfilment of a modern order for the “Court to go into mourning.” It is to be regretted none of the “black fans” have descended to us.

The grand portrait of Queen Mary at Madrid, painted by Antonio Moro, represents her in a rich brocaded dress edged with sable, which is most exquisitely painted.

Late in March, 1557, Queen Mary Tudor received a visit from the first Russian Ambassador

who ever reached these shores. He was known as the Muscovy Ambassador. The stranger had come to London on a mission connected with the foundation of a Russian company, which the Queen had confided to Sebastian Cabot. The Muscovy plenipotentiary was a Duke (his name is not recorded) and when he appeared before Mary he wore a very thick robe, lined and furred with a "Russian fur," possibly sable, and "had on his head a nightcap full of big pearls, the like of which had never been seen before for size." He lodged in the City, and was attended by a train of London merchants, "free of Muscovia." Thus attended, the ambassador and his suite were taken over Westminster Abbey, then newly restored, after its recent spoliation under Henry VIII. and Edward VI.

CHAPTER IX

*Elizabeth—Charles I.—Fur in art—Decline of the trade—
Its revival—The boas and the muffs of our grandmothers.*

IT is a rather curious fact, but the wardrobe accounts of Elizabeth are not particularly rich in *items* concerning her furs. The fact was, the exceeding heaviness of her farthingales and furbelows were such that fur could not be introduced with impunity into such an elaborate costume. That her nobles wore fur-lined cloaks is evident from the magnificence of those introduced into their numerous portraits. Elizabeth, however, had nightgowns lined with fur, possibly white rabbit skins, until the time of her death—but her gossamer wings and her marvellous ruffs could not possibly be worn with furs of any description.

Queen Anne of Denmark (wife of James I.) brought with her into England a quantity of furs and some “girdles of aيدر downe”; and we have a portrait of her in hunting costume, with a fur-edged hat of Tyrolese shape.

The elegant costume of Charles I.'s reign was

not of a nature to admit of embellishments, save on State occasions, of fur; but in that of Charles II. an effort was made to revive the trade, which, it seems, was then in a languishing state. The furriers, or "skinner" as they were called, of London, had their principal place of business in and about St. Mary Axe, near the Hall of their Guild, and where their successors are still to be found.¹

The great painters, Raphael, Titian, Holbein, Georgette, Tintoretto, Peter Porbus and Rembrandt, devoted themselves in a particular manner to the art of reproducing with the brush the beautiful varieties of furs included in the noble costume of the period. Everybody remembers, who has once visited Rome, the wonderful picture of the "Violinist,"

1 The furriers' trade in old Paris was one of the most important, and, indeed, was the sixth among the six great *arts et metiers*, with "halls" or special guilds. They were known as *Pelletiers*, or "*pelters*," because they dealt in *pelts*, and also *haubaniens*, from a tax or *hauban* which they paid annually direct to the king. Their guild was directed by a provost or grand master and six under masters, and their statutes, dating from 1490 to 1678, are still preserved. Very severe laws compelled them to sell only first-class skins and furs, and never to mix or pass off old skins for new. Almost every large city in France had its *Pelleterie* or fur-market; but, at present, the trade is exclusively followed in Paris and Lyons.



MARY TUDOR.

(By Lucas de Heere. In the possession of the Marquis of Exeter.)

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by Raphael, who is depicted as wearing a fur tippet, so marvellously painted that one can examine it with a magnifying glass. Equally well rendered is the tiger skin in the grand portrait of his mistress, the Fornarina. All know how dear to the artistic eye of Rembrandt was a handsome fur coat or cap, and how tenderly he elaborated the shading of every undulation of the surface of his sables. In France fur was always greatly esteemed, and at a very early date the lower orders ornamented their gowns with the skins of cats, lambs, squirrels and foxes, not forgetting, by the way, the wolf, always a favourite skin on account of its beauty, and in former times this ferocious animal was only too common in every part of the country. As elsewhere, the nobility favoured those costly furs, which have been noticed in the account of the English costumes of the Tudor period.

Even the fairies, by the way, in French legendary lore wore ermine, and in the *Lai de Lanval* the fairy queen appears in an ermine cloak.

Under Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon tried to render fur once again fashionable after a lapse of nearly a century, but in vain. She, however, usually wore a high border of ermine to her petticoat, and had the trimmings of her dress made of the "royal

fur" principally to indicate her quasi-royal position as the Morgannatic consort of the *Grand Monarque*.

The waxen effigy of Queen Mary II., preserved — together with that of her vicious little Consort, William III. — in that curious repository of such-like relics in Westminster Abbey, represents her as an exceedingly tall woman, wearing a costume of remarkable elegance, richly trimmed with fur. Her Majesty was a luxurious woman, and fond of good living; and, therefore, fell an easy victim to small-pox epidemic. Madame de Sévigné mentions the fact in her letters. "She was but thirty-three," she writes, "beautiful, and a reigning Queen; and yet she is dead in three days." The figure in question still wears its faded finery. The skirt and bodice are of purple velvet, very long in the waist; not pointed, but rounded. They are lined with miniver. The dress is open, and the ermine trimming is graduated to meet the ermine stomacher, and is very elegant. The sleeves are very long, and edged with narrow bands of miniver or ermine, without tails. The head-dress, which is exceedingly high, is in a dilapidated condition, and consists of three rows of curls, among which strings of pearls were originally twisted. Fortunately this singular relic of a custom which lasted for ages,



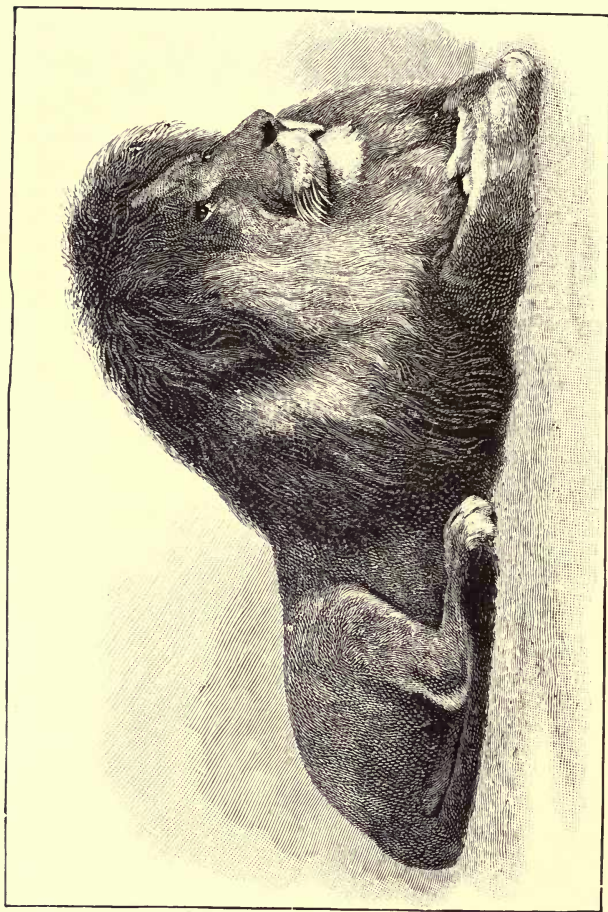
THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.
(From a Miniature by Isabey.)

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and which rendered the wax effigy the chief object at a public funeral, is carefully preserved. Strange to relate, among the waxen figures in the Westminster collection is one pertaining to this century—that of Nelson, dressed even as he was in life.

The numerous portraits of Queen Anne, and of the ladies of her Court, are not remarkable for the fur included among their *objets de luxe*. There is, however, a fine Knoller representing Anne wearing a brown satin gown, edged with sable. The Queens of the House of Hanover were particularly fond of narrow stripes of ermine, possibly to emphasise their regal state; but I do not remember a single portrait of any one of them with any other fur. The hanging sleeves affected by Queen Charlotte are often seen to be lined with black-tailed ermine, and there is a good portrait of Queen Adelaide with an ermine tippet. The Duchess of Kent, too, is represented as wearing a round-fashioned tippet of ermine. Her Majesty's coronation robes were magnificently trimmed with ermine, and must have produced a great effect, especially at her coronation, if we may judge by Challon's picture, and by the numerous descriptions of that never-to-be-forgotten and—as the Duke of Wellington expressed it—"blessed scene" which inaugurated her most glorious and progressive reign.

At the French Court, under Louis XV. and Louis XVI., fur was not much worn, except as garniture or trimming. A famous portrait of Madame de Pompadour, by Boucher, represents her wearing a rich velvet gown, edged with some dark, loose fur; and there is a noble picture at Versailles of Marie Antoinette in a velvet dress of the deepest green, handsomely trimmed with sable. The unhappy Queen wears on her head a broad-brimmed hat, with a sable tail on it, fixed by a jewel. Some of Reynolds' and Gainsborough's fair ladies wear long boas, and one or two—the noble Duchess of Ancaster (by Reynold's) at Houghton, for instance—wear ermine-lined cloaks. Still, although not at all neglected, fur was little worn from 1700 to 1800. Early, however, in this year, fur was once more in favour, and those extraordinary pumpkin-shaped muffs, nearly a yard long, the astounding high collars and constrictor-like "boas," worn by our grandfathers and mothers, can be studied in the fashion-books of those days. The charming Josephine had a particular affection for ermine, and in most of her portraits she appears wearing an edging of this fur to her very narrow skirt-gowns and long trains.



LION.

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CHAPTER X

The fur trade in history—The Hudson Bay Company—Astor—The Rocky Mountain Fur Company—Pierre Chouteau—Martin and Francis Bates—Statistics.

THE earliest record of a purely English Fur Trading Company was in 1578, when an expert was sent out to Newfoundland, "to seek for furs," which led to the first settlement of that important colony. The English only sent out fifty sail, so that they found themselves in a minority with the Spanish, who had over a hundred, and the French seventy. The British fleet returned with "a great many skins." From that time we have maintained intimate relationship with Newfoundland. In 1670, Prince Rupert founded another company, to trade for furs in the Hudson Bay, and, if possible, to open up a passage to the South Seas. This company erected a few forts, but does not appear to have flourished. Later, in 1673, another company was formed, and regarded with greater favour, as its object was to obtain furs by "our own exertions, and not through those of the Russians."

Notwithstanding our efforts, the American fur trade remained virtually in the hands of the French until late in the last century. They further secured it by re-erecting, in 1773, a fort at Niagara. It was not until the conquest of Canada that we were firmly established in the great fur regions, and became really prominent as fur traders.

For many centuries the Baltic ports were the great depôts for the trade, the furs being brought thither from Livonia, Sweden, Norway, Northern and North-eastern Russia, and later also from Siberia by caravans which deposit them in the great market towns of Moscow and Nishni Novgorod.

The discovery of the American Continent, however, soon changed the current of this traffic, for though sables and ermines still come from Russia, Siberia and Asia Minor, yet the virgin forests and waters of America furnish countless beavers, rich sables, the pine and stone martens, the beautiful mink, lynx, badger, racoon, the choicest white and black fox, the cross, blue red and white fox, the seal, and sea otter, the opossum, the bison, the black and grisly bear, besides others too numerous to mention. The fur trade was, however, until within 150 years ago, almost entirely monopolised by three or four companies. The Dutch East India Company was first in the



BEAR.

(*Ursus arctos.*)

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field, and carried on a gigantic trade in furs with the trading posts of New Amsterdam (New York), Beaverwyck (Albany), and one or two points on the Delaware River, as well as several points on the coasts of Maine from 1609 to 1684. The French very soon established themselves in the same traffic in Canada and farther north and west, their chain of posts and trading houses at one time extending from Hudson's Bay to New Orleans, and nearly all being actively engaged in the fur trade. A class of half-bred *voyageurs* and *cordeurs de bois* grew up in this traffic, who were and are to this day, skilful and successful huntsmen and trappers, but at the same time terrible vagabonds.

When the British Government had by wars and treaties succeeded to the possession of most of this region, the famous Hudson's Bay Company (chartered in 1660) took possession of these northern hunting fields. For almost 200 years this great Company flourished, and monopolised the traffic in fur. It had for a time a formidable rival in the North-West Company, established in 1790. This latter Company in 1803, erected trading factories on the Pacific Coast, and in 1808 John Jacob Astor founded the American Fur Company, with its lines of posts across the continent; by this means laying the corner stone of that gigantic fortune, which

has made his descendants one of the richest families in the world. Mr. Astor transferred the Pacific Fur Company to the North-West Company, whereby he dealt the death blow to the old Hudson's Bay Company, and confined his operations to the regions of the Rocky Mountains. Many adventurers, French as well as English, followed in his steps, amongst them being the brothers Auguste and Pierre Chouteau, who formed the Missouri Fur Company, which prospered greatly in 1814, but was dissolved in consequence of the war with Great Britain. In 1827 the Rocky Mountain Fur Company was formed, which sent trappers to the Pacific coast, in which expeditions it is calculated that at least forty out of every hundred men perished. The Chouteau business was sold to Martin and Francis Bates in 1859, after which date the American fur trade became more widely diffused in the hands of many individuals, and although much larger aggregate amounts are collected yearly in this traffic, the colossal fortunes made in former times are unlikely ever to be created again. They ceased with the fraudulent monopolies, which are impossible in our more advanced civilisation.

By far the largest quantities of the furs now generally used are brought from North America, and were, at one time, at the sole disposal of the Hudson's

Bay Company, which held a similar position to that of the East India Company, and by their charter possessed a trading monopoly, employed their own agents to traffic with the Indians, their own army of hunters and trappers, and their own officers, who, although they did not command actual soldiers as the officers of the East India Company did, held fortified "stations" over a vast extent of territory, and may be said to have ruled the country, and brought the natives under an organised system of control.

The region under the commercial authority of the Hudson's Bay Company, where it exercises absolute trading privileges, extends from the foot of the Rocky Mountains, along the parallel of 49° N. latitude to the head of Lake Superior, and thence in a north-westerly direction to the coast of Labrador and the Atlantic. Its entire length is about 2,600 miles, and its average breadth 1,460 miles. The area covered by this vast tract has been computed at 3,060,000 square miles.

A charter was granted to the Company by Charles II., in 1665, for a term of 200 years, and in 1849 a further grant was made by the British Government, by which the Company had rights for five years over Vancouver Island and the adjacent land on the Pacific Coast, the object of this conces-

sion being to afford facilities for the formation of a colony of British emigrants. This colony received the name of British Columbia.

On the expiration of the original charter in 1865, the Hudson's Bay Company was permitted to retain its monopoly in the fur country, the climate of the greater portion of the territory being too severe to admit of the cultivation of the land or the formation of a regular colony.

The whole system of obtaining furs is now changed. The trappers and hunters are no longer ignorant savages, ready to sell the skins which they have secured with toil and peril for beads, or blankets, or tobacco, representing only a small fractional part of the true value. They no longer barter on the principle that a musket is worth as many skins as will, when piled close, be the height of the weapon from stock to muzzle; and there are, therefore, no enormously long-barrelled pieces manufactured for the North American market.

The principles of extended commerce have regulated prices to definite market values, even between the hunter and the first consignee, and the result is that there should be no *fancy* prices for furs in the English warehouse, except under very exceptional circumstances indeed. The periodical collections of



FOX.

(*Caius vulpes.*)

furs from the Hudson's Bay territory are brought to London and are sold by auction, the principal sales taking place in January and March each year.

Few persons, except those having business relations with the fur trade, have any conception of its magnitude. The following is a summary of furs sold in the spring of 1895, by the Hudson's Bay Company and others, by public auction:—

| | | | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------|
| BEAR | - | - | - | - | - | 9,992 |
| BEAVER | - | - | - | - | - | 44,151 |
| BADGER | - | - | - | - | - | 2,056 |
| ERMINE | - | - | - | - | - | 7,250 |
| FISHER | - | - | - | - | - | 3,573 |
| SILVER FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 670 |
| BLUE FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 69 |
| RED FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 12,850 |
| WHITE FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 4,898 |
| CROSS FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 3,165 |
| KITT FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 134 |
| LYNX | - | - | - | - | - | 20,258 |
| MARTEN | - | - | - | - | - | 105,266 |
| MINK | - | - | - | - | - | 50,540 |
| MUSK OX | - | - | - | - | - | 748 |
| MUSQUASH | - | - | - | - | - | 674,811 |
| OTTER | - | - | - | - | - | 7,462 |
| RABBIT | - | - | - | - | - | 66,868 |
| RACCOON | - | - | - | - | - | 740 |
| SKUNK | - | - | - | - | - | 8,828 |
| WOLF | - | - | - | - | - | 1,442 |
| WOLVERINE | - | - | - | - | - | 634 |

Enormous as this supply is, however, it is insig-

nificant in comparison with the vast quantities of furs imported by private enterprise from the United States, and from Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and other British Provinces in North America. The collection offered at auction in London during the current year includes:—

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------|
| BEAVER | - | - | - | - | - | 20,277 |
| BEAR | - | - | - | - | - | 28,273 |
| BADGER | - | - | - | - | - | 11,250 |
| CIVET CAT | - | - | - | - | - | 20,769 |
| COMMON CAT | - | - | - | - | - | 18,822 |
| CHINCHILLA | - | - | - | - | - | 51,783 |
| ERMINE | - | - | - | - | - | 7,400 |
| FISHER | - | - | - | - | - | 3,351 |
| FITCH | - | - | - | - | - | 1,190 |
| SILVER FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 1,503 |
| BLUE FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 4,458 |
| RED FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 111,873 |
| WHITE FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 77,705 |
| GREY FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 47,725 |
| CROSS FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 5,460 |
| KITT FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 1,578 |
| JAPANESE FOX | - | - | - | - | - | 59,561 |
| GREBE | - | - | - | - | - | 12,048 |
| KOLINSKY | - | - | - | - | - | 13,340 |
| LYNX | - | - | - | - | - | 15,814 |
| MONGOLIAN LAMB | - | - | - | - | - | 16,995 |
| CHINESE LAMB | - | - | - | - | - | 1,114 |
| MARTEN | - | - | - | - | - | 114,281 |
| MINKS | - | - | - | - | - | 377,219 |
| MOUFFLON | - | - | - | - | - | 2,432 |
| MUSK OX | - | - | - | - | - | 170 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| RED MUSQUASH | - | - | - | - | 2,481,349 |
| BLACK MUSQUASH | - | - | - | - | 58,068 |
| NUTRIA | - | - | - | - | 660 |
| OTTER | - | - | - | - | 14,395 |
| AMERICAN OPOSSUM | - | - | - | - | 432,871 |
| AUSTRALIAN OPOSSUM | - | - | - | - | 1,087,230 |
| RABBIT | - | - | - | - | 14,500 |
| RACON | - | - | - | - | 743,598 |
| SEA OTTER | - | - | - | - | 1,221 |
| RUSSIAN SABLE | - | - | - | - | 29,269 |
| SKUNK | - | - | - | - | 745,779 |
| WOLF | - | - | - | - | 44,679 |
| WOLVERINE | - | - | - | - | 1,308 |
| WOMBAT | - | - | - | - | 92,025 |
| WALLABY | - | - | - | - | 105,358 |

The *mystery* of the fur *trade* has disappeared before the developments of commerce, just as the *mystery* of the fur *country* has diminished by the enterprise of travellers and explorers, who have made much of it familiar to the readers of books of travel. Of course, there is still a frequent pretence of mystery, when charlatans and unscrupulous dealers, with a desire to get rid of their stock or accumulations, palm off inferior or ill-dressed skins upon their customers, or upon those who may happen to be attracted by so-called "bargains," as many purchasers know to their cost, and fancy prices are often demanded and obtained; but, in truth, a lady should find little more difficulty in computing the cost of a fur cloak

or mantle, than in assessing the value of a silk dress if she only goes the right way about it and declines to deal with any but reliable and respectable furriers.



SQUIRRELS.

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CHAPTER XI

The sable and its history—The great fair of Nishni Novgorod—The Russian sable—The weasel tribe—The skunk—The chinchilla—The musk rat—The fox—Bearskins.

THE present revival and popularity of the use of fur clothing and of fur-lined garments has unquestionably tended to greatly develop the trades which produce the supply necessary to meet the increasing demand, and has consequently stimulated also the ingenuity and art of adapting, preparing and perfecting the remarkable variety of skins which now find their way to our markets.

When captured, the animals are at once skinned, and the skins hung to dry, either in the sun or near a fire. If the drying process be thoroughly accomplished, no harm is likely to happen to the pelts when packed and sent to a distance. Should they, however, be improperly dried, or become damp on the voyage, the hair falls off, and the pelts consequently become useless.

Arriving in this country, mostly from very remote

lands, in their rough state, the skins of the variety of animals which supply us with the furs used in the furrier's trade are classed under one denomination: "Peltry."

The first business of the consignee, on the arrival of the pelts at their destination, is to carefully sort them and classify them in order of size and quality. The next stage in the preparation of the skins consists in slightly damping and then leathering them, but for finer furs, such as sable, the same object is attained by trampling. Then they are fleshed. This is done on a large half-moon shaped knife. All the fleshy parts must be carefully shaved off, till the skin becomes as smooth as a glove. They are dried, and finally cleaned. The skins are put into a wooden drum, covered with sheet iron; a quantity of rosewood or cedar sawdust is put with them. The drum is heated to a certain degree, and must be kept turning all the time, so that the skins get well scoured. They remain in the drum till they are clean, and when taken out are well beaten, and are then ready for use.

Amongst the pelts thus imported, there are, however, a large number intended not for *fur*, but merely for *felt*. Only, however, a soft kind of hair is capable of being felted. If the fur of such

animals as the hare, rabbit, beaver, and of many other rodents (gnawing animals) be placed under a microscope, it will be discovered that its hairs are covered with minute serratures, which, in order to convert them into felt, must be entangled and matted together. It should be observed, however, that these animals are supplied with two kinds of hair—the external, which is long and coarse, and which will not “felt,” and the shorter, finer and more abundant, which grows close to the skin, and which, on the contrary, is easily felted. To prepare the skins for this latter process, the long hairs are first removed. Being of no use to the hatter, they are sold to upholsterers for stuffing chairs and sofas. The under hair, or *fur*, strictly so called, is then cut from the skin, and presents a light, fleecy mass, which, being tossed about by means of a vibrating string, becomes matted together and formed into a thin sheet of soft felt. The process goes on, and one thin sheet is pressed upon another, until the felt becomes of the required strength and thickness.

I will now turn the attention of my readers to the furs, properly so called, in use in commerce, and briefly relate the history and peculiarities of the various principal fur-bearing animals. I have, in the earlier part of this work, endeavoured to trace the history

of fur garments, &c., from the earliest period, and the ermine and other royal furs have received special notice. In the following pages I intend to give some idea of the extent of the fur trade, and, as I have already observed, of the principal animals whose skins are considered sufficiently handsome to make them of commercial value.

The sable, which is the most esteemed of all furs, seems not to have been unknown in Europe until a somewhat later period than the ermine. Its true home appears to be the most northern part of Asia, to which commerce was not extended until a comparatively recent date; and some conjecture that it was an acquaintance with its fine furs that induced the Russians to undertake the conquest of Siberia. The identity of this little animal has been much disputed by naturalists, by whom it has scarcely ever been seen, and who are not agreed as to the characteristics which distinguish it from various martens. It would appear, however, that it is about the same size as the marten, to which I believe it is closely allied. Its fur is of a deeper colour, and its toes are (during winter, at least) completely clad in woolly hair, a provision adapted to its habitation in the more frozen mountains. The painful chase of this animal is most pertinaciously persevered in



THE SABLE.
(*Mustela zibellina*.)

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during the depth of winter, amidst all the terrors of frightful snows, which might well daunt the hardiest and bravest hunters.

Russian sable is the most valuable of furs. The darkest and finest skins come from the Gakutsky district; they are the most esteemed, and will fetch from three to forty guineas each. A robe lined with this fur has sometimes been worth 1,000 guineas, the fair at Nishni Novgorod being the great depôt for all Siberian skins. Good sable tails, which have of late been so fashionable, realise a high price in the market; and the tips of those of inferior quality are carefully preserved for manufacturing into brushes and pencils for artists.

The sable, as already stated, is closely connected with the marten; in fact, in the trade, the American sable is called marten.¹

1 Hamlet: "I'll have a suit of sables." Sir Thomas Hammer turned "I'll have a suit of *sables*" into "I'll have a suit of *ermine*," and Warburton thinks it extremely absurd that Hamlet and the devil should both go into mourning. Neither Hammer nor Warburton perceived the latent irony in Hamlet's reply. Ophelia says, "His father has been dead twice two months," and he replies, "So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables." Robes of sable were amongst the most *costly* articles of dress, and by the Statute of Apparel 24 Henry VIII., it was ordained that none under the degree of an earl should use sables. This fur, as is well known, is not

The raw skins of the common American variety range in price from eight to thirty shillings each, and those of Hudson's Bay from twenty to seventy shillings each.

Russian sable is mostly skinned over the mouth, without any incision being made in the body, and the feet and tail are left as part of the fur, so that no portion of it is lost or injured. The average length of the body is twelve inches, and of the tail about six inches, so that the cost of a sable cloak or coat is very considerable. These furs, however, are largely used for trimmings and "sets." In any form sables have a very beautiful appearance. The natural colour of the Hudson's Bay sable is a warm brown, with a

black ; and it is difficult to know how it became connected with mournful association, as in Spencer : " Grief in all *sable* sorrowfully clad." In heraldry *sable* means black ; and, according to Beacham, the name is derived from the fur. Sables then were costly and magnificent ; but not essentially the habiliments of sorrow, through they had some slight association with mournful ideas. If Hamlet had said, " Nay, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of ermine," he would merely have said, " Let the devil be in mourning for I'll be fine." But as it is he says, " Let the devil wear the real colours of grief, but I'll be magnificent in a garb that only has a *facing* of something like grief." Hamlet would wear the suit a Ben Johnson's haberdasher wove. Would you not laugh to see a great councillor of state in a flat cap, with his trunk hose and hobby horse cloak, and yonder haberdasher in a velvet gown trimmed with sable ?



THE GLUTTON, OR WOLVERINE.

(*Gulo luscus.*)

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yellowish brown at the sides, and a darker tint along the back; the Russian skins are more delicate, finer in hair, and much darker in hue—the prevailing colour being ashen-brown, merging into a peculiar dim black towards the back.

The tails of the sables make superb garniture for seal or velvet cloaks, but even in this capacity a set of real Russian trimmings can scarcely be sold for less than £50, and will range as high as £200, though the American sable tail sets, which are often nearly as effective, may be bought at a much more moderate price.

Russian sable is the most highly esteemed fur in this country for its softness and extreme beauty. On account of its scarcity in our markets, we are glad to avail ourselves of the supply of a sable, the Pekan, or Woodshock, furnished by the Hudson's Bay Company, which is considered to be very nearly equal to Russian sable in beauty, and the 50,000 to 100,000 skins thus annually supplied are scarcely distinguishable, except by an expert, from those of the genuine or Russian sable.

Besides these, from 60,000 to 70,000 skins of Tartar sable are annually imported. These are of a bright yellow colour (much used, undyed, in the East), but are mostly dyed to the same tint as the

Russian sable, and with the pine, beech, and stone martens brought from Northern Europe and from Canada, to the vast number of 200,000 to 300,000 a year, a large proportion of which are also dyed.

I must not omit to mention, in connection with sable and marten, another fur which, if not so highly esteemed, is, nevertheless, very useful as well as beautiful, and one supplied by a small animal of the same family—viz., the mink. This little beast, called also sometimes the vison weasel (*Vison lutreola*, or *Mustela vison*), frequents the banks of waters in the far-away northern regions of America. It feeds on frogs and crayfish, and has its feet slightly palmated or webbed between the toes. Its coat is of a reddish brown with a white spot on the point of the chin, extending occasionally in a narrow line down the throat.

The skins most in demand are those of a fine dark colour, bearing a slaty or smoky tinge, which is the hue most admired. This fur was at one time so much in request, because of its resemblance to sable, that an attempt was made to establish *minkeries* for breeding the animal. It was found, however, that the fur of the tame mink had so deteriorated as to be comparatively useless. Mink is found in abundance in all parts of the Hudson's Bay territory and in Nova Scotia.



ERMINES.

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Mink skins are brought over from Canada to the number of nearly half a million, and sold at the annual sale of the Hudson's Bay Company and others, in London, in the month of March. This sale is always attended by great numbers of foreigners, who buy the skins for the Leipsic market, whence they are distributed throughout the European Continent. A considerable number, however, remain in England, and while the colour is very nearly that of sable, the fur can easily be distinguished by its being shorter and more flossy.

There are many other fur-coated animals of the same (the weasel) family used in commerce. Foremost amongst these are the polecat, or fitch, and the skunk. The former is common in Europe, the finest animals being found in Scotland. About 120,000 skins come into the market annually, the greater part going to the Continent and America, where they are much esteemed, only a few being used in England. It should be mentioned here that this fur is usually known in trade as "Fitch."

The skunk abounds in North America, south of Lat. 57°, being found principally in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It has a broad, fleshy body, short legs, a wide forehead, small eyes, short, round ears, and long claws, like those of a badger, on the fore feet.

The fur is soft and very thick; the hair on the tail is long and very coarse. The cheeks and under parts of the body are black; a white line from the tip of the nose widens considerably to the back of the head; here it narrows, and, passing over the shoulders, divides, and becoming much broader, runs along the sides, and continues along the tail. An egg-shaped black space is thus left upon the back, and the under part of the tail is black also. Its claws are very strong, and, unlike those of the sable, marten, &c., are suited for digging. It lives upon mice and frogs in summer, laying itself up in a hole and seldom going abroad through the winter. Of the skins sent to our market, many thousands are exported; so that, with the present demand there is for this favourite fur, its market value does not decrease. It may be mentioned that Americans often call it black marten.

There is an elegant little animal (the chinchilla) whose coat furnishes us with a lovely fur, the softest and most delicate in existence, and the most fashionable up to date.

Belonging to the family of rodents, quite distinct from those which have thus far been mentioned, it is found in an entirely different region, Peru and Chili, the best skins being exported from Valparaiso and



CHINCHILLAS.

(*Chinchilla lanigera*.)

Buenos Ayres. In form and character it approaches nearer to the hare or rabbit than to the mouse tribe. Its habitat is high up in the Andes. The variety yielding the best kind of fur (the chinchilla *Lanigera*) is described as of a clear grey colour above, passing almost into white on the under parts. It is about nine inches long; its tail about two inches; it has large black eyes, and large, roundish, nearly naked ears, full moustaches twice the length of its head, some of the hairs of which are jet black, others white. The chinchilla is subterranean in its habits, living chiefly in holes in the rocks, and though somewhat shy, is of a mild disposition. The earliest history we have of Peru mentions the use made by the Incas of the fur of this beautiful animal, the hair of which they wove into a kind of cloth, whilst the skins, with their soft fur, yielded them a most luxurious lining for the mantles of their chiefs and nobles. The skins themselves are thin and tender, requiring delicate manipulation. Perhaps its more fragile texture, combined with the high price it usually fetches, renders it less fit for common use than the stronger kinds of fur. There are many other rodents, whose skins are prized in greater or lesser degree which find their way in vast numbers to our fur markets, whence they are eagerly bought, to

be manufactured either into luxurious garments and rugs, or it may be into hats. It is indeed marvellous in what myriads these little skins are supplied to our demand. From recent reports we find that above 3,000,000 squirrel skins, many of which used to be dyed sable colour, are shipped yearly for England; above 3,250,000 musquash, or musk rats, from North America; 1,500,000 opossums from Australia and America; besides a million and a half Russian white hare-skins, which are of superior quality, to say nothing of the many thousands which Germany, Greece and Sicily send us; add to these 60,000 to 70,000 beavers from North America, 100,000 skins of coypou or nutria from South America, 150,000 marmots, 265,000 of varieties of fox (of which more anon), as well as 50,000 wolves and 30,000 bears, a certain number of musk-ox skins, not to mention, at least, 22,000 American otters, 40,000 cats, and a considerable number of African monkeys, and we should seem to have such an array of skins as would afford an enormous supply of clothing impervious to wind and cold, and which at first sight one would imagine could scarcely find purchasers; but yet there seems to be no over-supply, and were it not for some stringency in the regulations for the taking



THE COMMON SQUIRREL.

(*Sciurus vulgaris.*)

of many of the animals, which, to a certain extent, prevents it, we might reasonably look forward to the speedy extirpation of whole species.

As the fox affords us several varieties, some of which rank amongst our choicest and most costly furs, they must not be passed over without special notice. It is not from the common European fox, but from various American and Siberian species that our supply is derived. A red American fox (*Canis fulrus*), not often used in our country, affords a valuable fur; about 120,000 skins a year of this animal pass through the English market to Turkey, fetching often a higher price than those of the white or the grey fox.

The species of fox whose fur is most esteemed in our own country is the beautiful black or silver fox (*Canis argentatus*), single skins of which have been sold in London for £150. The late Emperor of Russia exhibited in London a pelisse made of the necks of this fox, which was valued at £3,500. It inhabits the northern parts of Europe, Asia and America, and answers well to the description of both the names given it, its beautiful and copious fur being of a rich glossy black, whilst the longer exterior hairs are of a silvery white, lending a very elegant appearance to the animal. It is

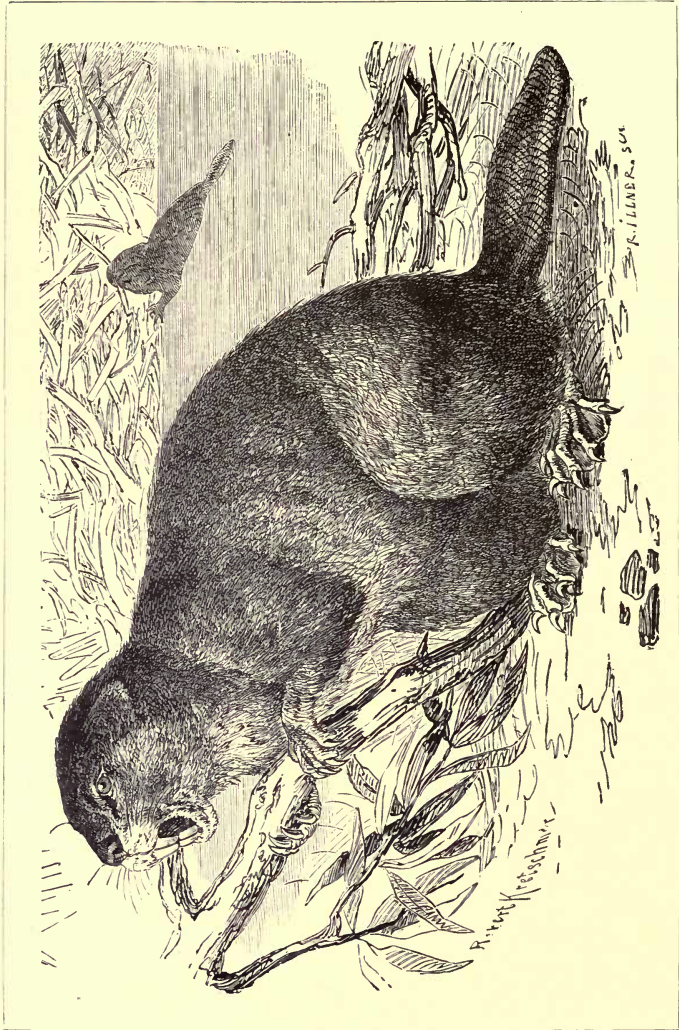
mostly used for trimming by the luxurious Russian nobility.

There is an iron-yellow fox, found in Tartary, sometimes called the Cossack fox, of which 40,000 or 50,000 are imported into England, and, singularly enough, showing the eccentricities of trade, are re-sold for the Russian and Turkish markets.

The blue fox, a very rare and exceptionally picturesque animal, is obtained solely from the Hudson's Bay Territory and Greenland. Its exquisite fur is not to be excelled by that of any other species. It was the favourite fur of Catherine de Medicis, Queen of France, and of which she possessed a very costly and most elaborately-trimmed mantle. It was at that time the most highly-prized fur. It makes very handsome trimmings, boas, and muffs.

Japan, which is up-to-date in most things, not excepting furs, is sending to this country about 60,000 foxes a year. They are a smaller kind, of a brownish tint, and are used chiefly for trimmings and collars.

The white, or Arctic, fox forms a very beautiful lining for opera cloaks, and is one of the most effective furs for ornamental purposes. A beautiful colour is now imparted to this lovely skin, giving it



THE BEAVER.

(*Castoridae*.)

much the appearance of the more costly blue fox. There are, also, silver grey fox furs from Virginia and elsewhere, which are of smaller value, though handsome and useful, especially for rugs.

The red Hudson's Bay fox yields a thick, soft fur of a sandy colour, very fine in quality, and excellent either for fur robe or rug, which may usually be bought for from six to fifteen guineas, of good quality and large size.

Reference has already been made to bear skins; and it may be worth while to note in passing that over 25,000 skins of the *black* bear are annually supplied by British North America, and are mostly used for boas and trimmings; the fur being soft and long, adapts itself for that purpose better than any other. A good many, also, are bought for the accoutrements of our military, most notably the various regiments of foot-guards and the Honourable Artillery Company. The cub bear skins are more expensive than the full-grown ones, on account of their softness. Skins of brown, grizzly and Polar bears, are also imported in small numbers. A good many Russian bears are used also, but, being very coarse, are made mostly into coachmen's capes—a fashion (a sensible one) which has made considerable headway in London and other

large cities, affording great protection to these men, exposed as they often are to very inclement weather, and much subject in consequence to bronchitis and other inflammatory diseases.



THE RACCOON.
(*Procyon lotor.*)

CHAPTER XII

The racoon—Astrachan—Sea otter—The Thibet and Mongol lamb—Wolverine—The platypus.

AMONGST the miscellaneous skins which reach our market should be mentioned about 750,000 racoons, from North America, at least two-thirds of which, with those of a small number of badgers and gluttons, are re-exported to Leipsic, and thence to Russia for men's coat linings.

The racoon (*Procyon lotor*) is found in North America, and also in some of the West Indian Islands. It lives principally in the hollows of trees, and in its wild state is very savage, committing great slaughter among wild or domesticated birds of all kinds. In captivity, however, it will live upon bread, milk, eggs, &c. Its specific name (*lotor* or *washer*) is said to be derived from its most marked peculiarity, the habit of plunging its dry food into water before eating it. It has a great liking for crabs and other crustacea, and is remarkably expert at opening oysters, an article of food for which it shows a great partiality.

Another skin must be mentioned, which has of late been much in fashion in England—Persian lamb. It consists of the skins of newly-born lambs, the curl of which is artificially preserved by wrapping up *immediately* to keep it from contact with the air. The natural colour of this fur is a rusty black. It is dyed black, and has been used from time immemorial as an article of dress, especially for head-dresses in Persia.

These, however, are not sold in the raw state in England, but are taken once a year to the fair at Nishni Novgorod by the Tartars. They are all sold to Leipsic merchants, who are most skilful in dressing and dyeing them. It can be safely said that Leipsic supplies the whole world with Astrachans and Persians.

The Thibet and Mongolian lamb, also some Chinese lamb skins, are very fashionable. Some 35,000 skins were sold here by auction last year, but quite as many were sold direct by Hong Kong agents. They are a beautifully-white silky fur, and make pretty evening wraps, but are mostly dyed black, and used for trimmings, boas, and muffs.

The sea otter (*Lutra lutris*) is a distinct branch of the *lutra*, or otter, species, haunting sea-washed rocks, and living mostly in the water, its food being

fish. It is not formed for making its abode on land, as its long body and very short hinder feet do not allow it to make much progress. To the great sorrow of the fur trading world, these valuable animals are getting scarcer every year. In 1889 the supply was 4,000 skins, which number has been reduced every year, 1895 only bringing 1,222; and, hunted as they are at present, the sea otter will soon rank among the extinct species. A single skin was sold for £225 here, at last March sales. It is an inhabitant of both coasts of the North Pacific, its chief haunts being Alaska, west coast of Canada, and Vancouver Islands. On the Asiatic side it is found in Kamtchatka.

The sea otter fur is delightfully soft and fine, varying in colour from dark chestnut to deep brown, according to the age of the animal. It is a great pity that it should be so little used in England.

The "shubes," or large coats worn in Russia during the sledge journeys, are often effectively trimmed with sea otter. It has lately been extensively used for ladies, worn as garnitures for seal mantles.

The wolverine (*Gulos luscus*) is obtained from the Arctic regions and the Hudson's Bay territories.

A portion of the skin is so fine, and of such a rich hue, that when well worked it has much the appearance of sable tail; and as the fur wears exceedingly well, and is moderate in price, it is in great favour as a fashionable trimming, as well as for carriage rugs.

The ocelot is found in Paraguay, and has a very handsome skin, with spots like those on the coat of the leopard; but it is much thinner in the pelt than the leopard skin, besides being more silky.

Ocelot is in request for carriage rugs and for coverlets.

The platypus ornithorhynchus, a rare and exceedingly remarkable animal, is discovered in New Holland, and has been described by naturalists as the connecting link between bird and beast. The strange peculiarities of the creature are that its young are produced from eggs like birds, but the female parent afterwards suckles them, after the manner of mammals. The platypus has a beak, resembling that of a duck, and is web-footed, the male being armed with a formidable and venomous spur.

The fur of the platypus resembles that of the otter, but is usually more glossy in appearance.

The beaver (*Castor fiber*) needs little description,

though the accounts of the habits of the animal and the mode of trapping it are exceedingly interesting. The demand for beaver fur was once enormous, till silk plush put it out of the field, in the manufacture of hats.

It is still valuable as a fur adaptable for collars, facings and linings for gentlemen's coats, as well as for muffs, trimmings, &c., and is used extensively in cold climates. It has lately become one of the most fashionable furs for ladies' wear.

A very beautiful and effective trimming, known as silvered beaver, is produced by the elaborate process of inserting the silver hairs from the badger into the beaver skins, by means of a barbed needle, which carries *each hair separately* through half the thickness of the pelt, where it is securely fastened.

The musk-rat, or musquash (*Fiber zibethicus*), comes among the furs chiefly used for trimming. It may be dyed to imitate mink, to which it has a very similar appearance, when its pale slaty colour has been converted to a warm brown tint, with a "topping" of darker hue on the back. Some of the musquash furs are, however, nearly black, and the best quality make very handsome trimmings at a moderate cost.

Excellent linings for cloaks and gentlemen's coats

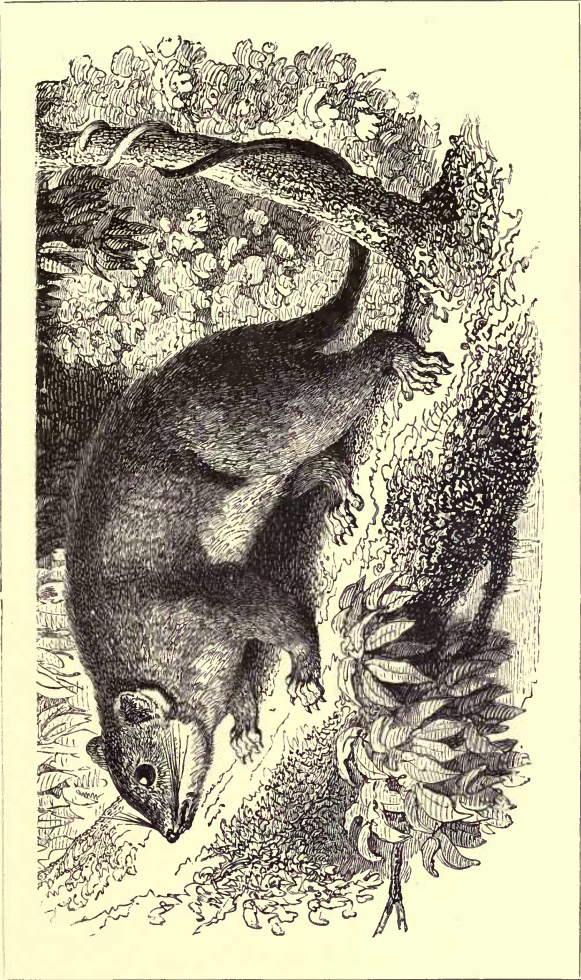
may be obtained from musquash at very moderate prices.

The grey squirrel has always been, and seems likely to remain, a favourite fur for lining and trimming. The best is the Siberian, the lustre and tone of which is exceedingly beautiful.

Much skill is required in matching the skins to form a lining for a large cloak or other article of dress, since the back of the fur is the most valuable portion, and has to be used for the more expensive purposes ; while the under portion, light grey and white, is reserved for the less costly linings. The finest linings are manufactured at Weissenfeldt, in Germany.

The opossum (*Didelyhys virginiana*) called "Virginia" comes from Virginia and other parts of America, and is a long fur of a mottled or greyish colour, and when dyed is much used for trimmings, capes, &c. The beautiful rich brown long fur comes from Tasmania, and is chiefly used for rugs ; but the variety of hue makes it very attractive for ornamental linings or trimmings. The grey opossum is chiefly from Australia, and is considerably cheaper than the Tasmanian variety.

The bear (*Ursus arctos*) can scarcely be called a fur to be worn as a portion of dress in this country,



OPOSSUM.

(*Didelphys Virginiana*.)

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MUSK RAT.
(*Castor zibeticus*.)

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except the skins of the brown or the black bear-cubs, which are decidedly handsome as trimmings, and are used for linings and collars of the Russian shube, or sledge-coat.

The best quality of coachmen's capes are made of the commoner and coarser bearskin, and also of the racoon and of Chinese goatskin. The fur of the cub-bear is expensive, but it is much in use.

The small brown bears of Russia and the Rocky Mountains are also valuable for their fur; other skins, like those of the Arctic wolf, and the less valuable prairie wolf, are used chiefly for rugs—the skins of the grizzly bears being frequently converted into driving aprons.

The wild cat (*Felis catus*), of which there are several varieties, is of a pale grey colour, and is large, strong, and exceedingly fierce. The black cat, or genet, though coarse, was at one time of value, and is still admired for its black colour. The tail of the black cat was once used extensively by the Polish Jews as ornaments for their caps.

African cat is a very beautifully-spotted fur, of grey colour, marked with a wavy black. It is chiefly used for rugs; but catskins, like dogskins, have long been in demand for other trades than that of

the furrier. It is not easy for an unskilled eye to distinguish the ordinary wild cat fur from that of the "harmless necessary" domestic variety, and there may have been occasions, when this fur was in demand, upon which a scarcity of skins of a particular colour has been met by an order upon a London "fancier." This, however, is a branch of business which probably survives only in legendary accounts.

Up to the time of the great Exhibition of 1851, monkey was an unknown fur; but some black monkey-skins attracted the attention of a dealer, and since that time many thousands of the animals have been killed by the natives. It has been said by a writer on the subject, that the negroes, being thus induced to make war on the monkeys, ceased to make war among themselves.

The fur of the long-haired monkey makes beautiful muffs, and is greatly esteemed, especially in the United States.



PLATYPUS.

(*Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus.*)

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CHAPTER XIII

The seal : its history—Its importance in trade—Alaska—The method of capturing seals—The process of preparing them—Furs in houses as decoration—Sarah Bernhardt and her lion's skin.

I HAVE reserved the sealskin for the last of the popular furs of our day, because its preparation is a specialty of English, and pre-eminently of London workmen.

There are three distinct families, namely, eared seals, the walruses, and the true seals; the two last named are known in the commercial world as hair seals, and the first named as the fur seals, which furnish the great bulk of those employed for ladies' clothing, the *fur seal*, properly so-called (Genus *Otaria*). These animals, which abound on the shores of the Northern Pacific, off the coasts of Alaska and the Aluetian Islands, are also found in the Atlantic, but they descend as far as the South Shetland Isles. Travellers have spent much time and pains in observing their character and habits, and they are

universally acknowledged to exhibit a high order of instinct—even intelligence. Some of them have been taught a variety of tricks, to obey the voice of their master, to beat time to music, and know when spoken to. One was exhibited recently in London which was quite as intelligent as a trick dog. The male, when full grown, which may be said to be at five or six years of age, measures from six and a half to seven and a quarter feet from the tip of the nose to the end of its body, and weighs at the least 400 lbs., a stout old seal often as much as 500 lbs. This is in the early spring, when they have accumulated a vast store of fat. Its head is small in comparison with its thick neck and shoulders; the eyes are large and expressive, the muzzle and jaws about the size and form of those of a Newfoundland dog, but without the overhanging lips; the upper lip bears a long, stiff moustache. The fore-feet, or flippers, are a pair of dark bluish-black hands, eight or ten inches broad at their junction with the body, and fifteen or eighteen inches long. These have no suggestion of fingers, but the hind feet, which are longer, have loose, slender, long, ribbon-like toes, resembling, says a recent American traveller, “a pair of black kid gloves, flattened out and shrivelled.” The female is a much smaller



THE FALKLAND ISLAND FUR SEAL.

(*Otaria Falklandica.*)

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animal, about four to four and a half feet in length, and much more shapely, with a lithe, elastic form. The head and large blue-black eyes are said to be exceedingly beautiful, with a gentle and attractive expression. The young are at first jet-black, changing when about three months old to a light grey over-hair, with an under-fur of a soft, light brown hue. When this new coat has been donned, the baby seal (or pup, as it is called) takes to the water for the first time, having first seen the light at some small islet which has been chosen by the old seals, and to which they all congregate at the breeding season for the production of their young. These places, called rookeries, are annually peopled by vast multitudes of seals, and are the scenes of many a fierce combat between the old "see-catchies," as the natives designate the father seals.

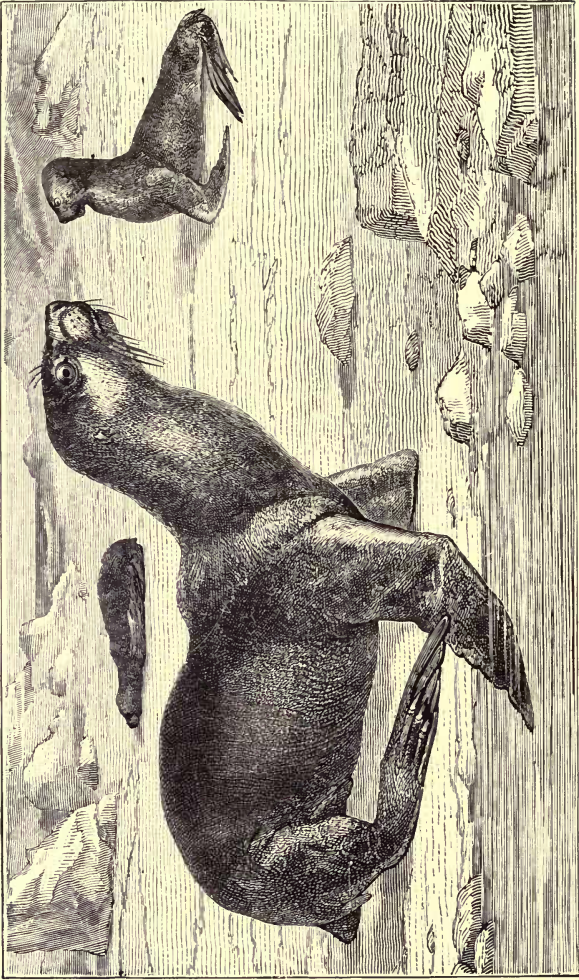
The fur seals (*Phocidæ*) certainly rank next in importance to Russian sables, and are altogether unrivalled for the purposes to which they are adapted. The largest numbers of seal furs are taken at Alaska and Copper Island. Alaska, which may be regarded as the great fur seal territory, is situated at the extreme north-west of the American Continent, and was formerly designated Russian America, having been sold by Russia to the United States only

about fifteen years ago, for the sum of eight million dollars.

The American Government granted a lease of the country, with exclusive trading rights for twenty years, to a Company of Speculators, at an annual rental of 50,000 dollars and a duty of two and a half dollars on every skin exported, at the same time binding the Company not to capture more than 100,000 seals in any one year. This number has been restricted, however, since the seal fisheries question, to about 1,500. Therefore, if the full complement were to be taken, there would be paid on each skin a sum of three dollars, or twelve shillings and sixpence, to which must be added the expenses incurred in capturing the seals and exporting the skins.

The Alaska sealers, being prohibited from destroying more than a specified number of the animals, act with a certain amount of discretion, and carefully abstain from killing the female seals, as, by so doing, the numbers would sensibly diminish in the following season. By the absence of this precaution in other places, and notably in the South Shetland Isles, the species there has been almost exterminated.

The seals which come from Alaska are of the



SEA LIONS.

(*Trichechus rosmarus.*)

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most uniformly good quality, and the Alaska seal may be said to bear the palm for the closeness of the fur and its great durability; but some of those brought from the Shetland Isles command high prices, because of their rarity and the richness and length of the fur. The Copper Island skins are usually looser and lower in the fur than the Alaska, but in some seasons are very rough and full. The skins from Robin Island, on the other hand, are showy in appearance, but do not wear well. Those from Lobos Island are small, but of great beauty, and have a velvety appearance, but likewise are not recommended for wear.

Japanese skins are usually of good uniform quality, and are very firm and bright. Those from Australia and New Zealand are remarkably full in the fur, rich and fine. The skins from Cape Horn, Patagonia and Falkland Island are mostly of a much lower description.

The fur of the seal is found to be thickest and finest in the third and fourth year, and the natives employ great skill and discrimination in selecting the animals for "driving." This process is carried on in June and July, in the very early morning. The numbers taken are strictly limited by the American Government, but as the period during which the

killing can be accomplished is very short (the seals being in prime condition for only 28 or 30 days) the greatest care and circumspection has to be used. The herds are driven to the "killing grounds," which are situated close to the villages. Here they are rested until cooled before the slaughtering begins, for if killed whilst heated, the hair comes off in the skinning process, and the pelt is thereby lost. The whole male population of the village then turn out, dressed in thick flannel shirts, stout pants and boots. Each man is armed with strong sealing clubs, which are made for the purpose of oak or hickory, a stabbing-knife, a skinning-knife, and a whetstone. At a given signal, the men drive 100 or 150 seals to the spot selected, surround them, till they are closely huddled together, when the head man scrutinizes the assembled animals, and quickly selects those which are either too old or too young, or otherwise unfit.

From the killing and skinning fields the pelts are at once taken to a large wooden structure, called the salt-house. Here they are carefully examined and laid out one upon another in "kenches," or deep bins, salt being sprinkled plentifully on the fleshy side of each pelt, and as each bin is filled it is closed in with planks. After lying there for



POLAR BEAR.

(*Ursus*, or, *Thalassarcus maritimus*.)

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two or three weeks to "pickle," they are rolled up, two together, with the hairy parts out, and being tightly corded, they are ready for shipping.

When the pelts arrive in London they have to be unpacked and sorted by men experienced in this kind of work, and are then sold, usually at public auctions in Mincing Lane, to the brokers or furriers.

In calculating the value of a raw skin, the trapper turns it up "the wrong way," so that he may see not the points only, but the whole depth of the hair, and note its closeness and fineness. Just in the same way, in making up a sealskin cloak or other garment, the tail end of the fur is placed uppermost. Were it placed the other way, with the head upward, only the points would be seen; and instead of a fine uniform lustre, there would be a peculiar bluish-grey appearance, by no means so pleasing.

Many skins are poor, and the fur is thin, in consequence of the animals having been killed in the summer season. This defect is easily seen by imitating the method of the trapper—holding the skin upside down and blowing gently, in order to see whether the fur is close and fine; a plan which applies to most other furs beside seal.

Fine, close pile, and soft, pliable pelt are the first

considerations in choosing a first-rate sealskin, and, as several are required to make a mantle or jacket of any considerable size, it is important that there should be uniformity of quality, hue and lustre.

The colour of the fur-seal varies scarcely at all, and the rich, dark, or warm red-brown which we see in the prepared sealskin is produced by the art of the dyer, the English dyer being the most skilful in giving what may be called a natural tinge. Without much and patient preparation, even the best sealskin would not make a handsome fur, and it could scarcely be worn without undergoing several processes.

These latter undertake the dressing of the skins, which are by no means tempting looking, for it must not be supposed that a "sealskin" as worn by its original owner is the same attractive-looking, soft coat that it afterwards becomes; on the contrary, the lovely fur is entirely hidden by a coat of stiff hair, greyish-brown in colour, and fairly grizzled. The pelts are received by the furrier in the rough, and with the salt still clinging to them. They are now washed; the fat is taken off with a knife, great care being exercised that no injury is done to the skins in the process, although they are fined down to the roots of the



THE TIGER.
(*Felis tigris.*)

coarse hair, which is removed by another process, so that the fur proper alone remains. The skin now passes through the various processes of "currying," and is finally dyed. This dyeing process seems to be the great secret of the success of our English seal-furriers, as they alone are able to dye the skins of the *dark, deep*, rich brown so indispensable at the present moment, without injuring the skins, and, at the same time, of so holding a dye that it does not come off by rubbing or exposure to damp. To accomplish all this involves a vast amount of skilful work, great patience, and scientific experience, so that eventually, when the labour is added to the prime cost of obtaining the pelts, it is easy to see why sealskins are costly. In addition to this is the cost of fashioning the fur into garments. This latter process, however, is not necessarily carried out in London, for whilst it is true that nine-tenths of the sealskins are dressed and prepared in London and by English workmen, it is nevertheless true that many sealskins are bought by France, Germany, Canada, and the United States of America in the rough, and are manufactured afterwards into garments.

Prices vary from £18 for a cloak of fair quality to sixty guineas for a magnificent article; but in all

the high qualities the skins may be seen at the INTERNATIONAL FUR STORE.

There are two or three other varieties of seals, which also supply us with excellent and beautiful fur. The saddle-back or harp-seal, which abounds in the Greenland seas, and the bladder-nosed seal, which has a most beautiful coat of black fur beneath an outer one of bristly hair.

The introduction of late years of the use of the skins of the larger animals, such as the Polar bear, the buffalo, the bison, the tiger, the leopard, and even the lion, as decorations in the furnishing of large apartments, has led to an increased commerce in these skins, which are unquestionably beautiful, not only as mats and rugs, but also for wall decoration. The skin of the leopard makes exceedingly pretty chair-backs, and so, for the matter of that, does the undyed seal. Madame Sarah Bernhardt has introduced, with startling effect, a lion's hide in her beautiful study in Paris, and another leading French artiste, Madame Rejane, has a lion (stuffed) rampant as a lamp-bearer. Monkeys can be rendered picturesque objects of furniture as lamp-stands and card-holders. In short, the unconviviality of modern house decoration permits of the introduction of many objects, even selected from animal life, which



THE COMMON WILD CAT.

(*Felis catus.*)

would have startled our quiet ancestors out of their wits.

Undoubtedly, however, when good taste intervenes and vulgarity is avoided, handsome fur rugs and skins, and even stuffed animals, produce a fine effect. It requires, however, great judgment in the use of these to avoid the charge of vulgarity. They must be prepared to perfection. These can be obtained at the INTERNATIONAL FUR STORE, where a large collection of stuffed animals is exhibited, of which many museums would be proud, and which well deserves inspection.

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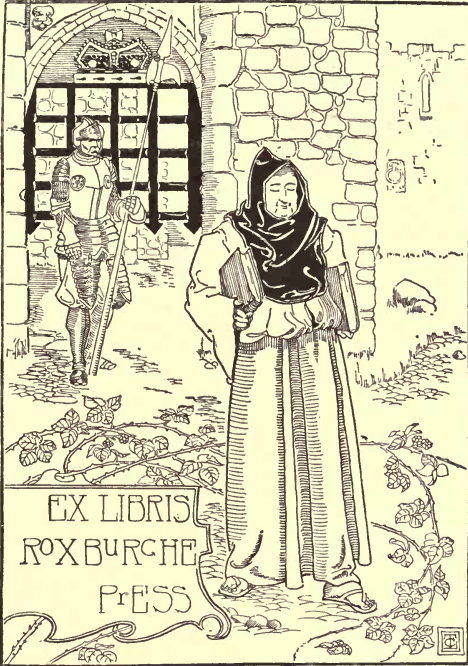
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